RODRIGO POLANCO

HANS URS VON BALTHASAR

II

CENTRAL ASPECTS OF HIS *TRILOGY*



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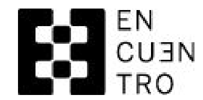
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To the Community of St. John in Basel, which keeps alive the memory of H. U. von Balthasar and A. von Speyr

Introduction

Target

Today, no one doubts the significant (and innovative) theological contribution made by Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) to the Church and culture today. However, for multiple reasons -among others the complexity and extension of his work- his thought is still not sufficiently known, nor has it always been appreciated as it deserves, something that happens in a special way in the Spanish-speaking world. It is true that some aspects of his theology are well known (e.g. the affirmations about the "Petrine" or "Marian" principles of the Church; or the identity between "person and mission" in Jesus, etc.), and some of his phrases or concepts have also become commonplace in current theology (e.g. "the whole in the fragment", "the whole in the fragment", "the whole in the fragment", "the whole in the fragment", "the whole in the fragment", etc.).gr. "the whole in the fragment", "theology on its knees", etc.), but this does not mean that his global theological proposal is well known, much less that the structure of his thought is adequately understood, or that the central things he wanted to express are valued in all their amplitude. Even when some of his statements or reflections are taken out of their integral and structuring context, or when they are interpreted from other perspectives, they have either been acidly criticized (e.g. his speculations about hell or the hope in the salvation of all), or they have been used for other purposes, which were not necessarily in Balthasar's original thought (e.g. some of his reflections on the reality and symbolism of the masculine and the feminine). In all these cases a better and deeper knowledge of the globality of his theology, of the structures shaping his thought and of the theological, cultural and philosophical context from which his many contributions and theological novelties are presented and must be understood, is lacking.

The work that we now offer wants to contribute precisely to a better knowledge of the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar from its global context and its structures of thought. It aims to expose the central

aspects of his theology, in order to better understand the most important contributions that this great thinker has made to contemporary theology, starting from the essential lines of his theological proposal. And since his *Theological Trilogy* (written between 1961 and 1987, in 16 vols.) is the masterpiece and summit of his productivity (composed of *Gloria, Theodramatica* and *Theologica,* plus the *Epilogue*), and that for Balthasar it became "the fundamental plan, the concern of a lifetime"[1] , it is then the place where we can see reflected the deepest of his thought and the result of many years of study, contemplation, apostolic dedication and fruitful dialogue with multiple authors; and where a sort of recapitulation of all his theology has been captured. Therefore, our text will expose the fundamental theological contributions of the author developed in an orderly and synthetic way in his *Theological Trilogy.* But its aim is not to summarize these volumes, nor to expound all that he says there. Nor does it intend to replace their indispensable and always enriching reading. Its purpose is more limited and precise: to indicate the most relevant aspects of his theological proposal, to explain them within its global organization, and to show its novelty and contributions to contemporary theology. With all this, the reader will be able to form a general idea of "what Balthasar says" and will have the essential elements to undertake a direct reading of his multiple works.

Content

The text is composed of nine chapters. The first, entitled *Revelation of the glory of the Father in the manifestation/hiding of the incarnation,* begins the presentation because, in the *Trilogy,* it is also the gateway to understanding the revelation. It is composed of three sections. The first, by way of prolegomena to the chapter, is a hermeneutical introduction that indicates the fundamental criteria for the transcendent glory of God, which appears in various ways in the Old Testament, to be made present in the person of Jesus. This is followed by a survey of the various forms of the presence of this glory of God, first in the history of Israel, then especially in Jesus, the Word made flesh, and particularly in his passion and death, as the glory of God in

the hiddenness. The third section presents, in five complementary aspects, what can be understood by the glory of God in Sacred Scripture. It is the divinity of God that is expressed, justified and given to us in the Spirit and that, in the end, coincides with the very love of God. The second chapter, entitled *Trinity and the Existence of the "Other" in God,* is the indispensable foundation for further understanding all of Balthasar's other themes. It is divided into two main parts. The first exposes the fundamental characteristics of his Trinitarian doctrine, which is based on the elementary affirmation that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, but where Balthasar reaffirms the fact that God has revealed himself economically as Trinity, precisely because he has previously and eternally been immanent Trinity, that is, in God there has always existed a divine other with whom there can be an intratrinitarian I-Thou relationship, which allows him to be effectively "love." Along with that, from Jesus' revelation he deduces all the characteristics that are possible to affirm about God as Trinity. The second part reflects on the language that can be used to speak of the Trinity, where, together with a negative (biblical) theology, he elaborates on the language of the incarnate Word and of the images with which something of the Trinity can be explained. These first two chapters can be considered a certain unity in that they both refer to the Christian God.

The third chapter, entitled *Possibility of a relationship between finite and infinite freedom,* after exposing the general theological framework of the *Theodramatic,* which is based precisely on the possibility and existence of finite freedoms interacting with the infinite freedom, and after posing the problem and the paradox of the existence of both freedoms together, describes the characteristics of both finite (human) freedom and infinite (divine) freedom. Then, starting from an indispensable Trinitarian framework, it is explained how it is possible and what happens in God so that a true finite freedom can exist. The central point is the *latency* assumed by God to allow the existence of other freedoms and the understanding of grace as a gift and action of God, through the Spirit, but as *interior intimo meo* (= more interior than the deepest part of me). It ends with some theological

consequences for a better understanding of the theology of grace and election. The fourth chapter, *Foundations for a Christological theology of history,* sets out his theology of history which, from *Theodramatics,* can be described as Christological. It is a chapter that in some way forms a unity with the previous one, since it is the historical consequence of the interaction of the finite and infinite freedoms. First, it exposes the Trinitarian presuppositions and the view from the Apocalypse, which are necessary for a theological understanding of human history. Then - on the basis of a well-founded exegetical position - he describes the Christological and eschatological foundation of history, which determines it as a history that is divided between the yes or no to the slain Lamb and is therefore fundamentally vertical. And, thirdly, by teaching the possible periodizations in history from this Christological point of view, he explains the characteristics of this same history now in its horizontal aspects, and the hope that drives it. He concludes by reflecting on some of the criticisms that this view of history has received. With these two chapters, Balthasar's theological anthropology has been presented in a relatively complete way: the human being in his relationship with God, considered both essentially and historically.

The next two chapters present Christology, divided - pedagogically, as in the *Theodramatic* - into what Christ is and what he does. The fifth chapter, *Human Life of the Word made flesh,* describes what we might call a "fundamental Christology." It briefly introduces the Christological theme, showing the centrality of Christ as the *concretissimum* [= most concrete] of the salvific work. Then, from three different angles, the foundations of faith in Jesus as the Christ are approached. First, from a hermeneutical point of view, it is shown that the method of Christology is undeniably based on the ellipsis between the manifestation of Jesus and the faith of the one who perceives him, and the consequences of this. Secondly, it explains what it means for the Word of God to have become *flesh:* the fact that God becomes "something" other than himself; what *flesh* means as a limitation, but identical with humanity; and the fact of being under the condition of *sin.* Finally, one of the author's most characteristic

themes is presented: the identity, in Jesus, of person and mission, and all the consequences that this implies for the human life of Jesus and for us. This identity allows us to understand how Jesus can be a true man and, at the same time, be the divine Person of the Word. The sixth chapter, entitled *Trinitarian Soteriology and the Redemptive Substitution of Jesus,* exposes the most characteristic of Balthasar's thought on this topic, which is, at its core, the vicarious substitution of Christ. It is divided into two main sections. The first offers a synthetic biblical and historical development of the Christian soteriological doctrine, in order to provide an overview of the different aspects involved in this topic -especially from the biblical point of view- and how, throughout history, various explanations have been attempted to give a global account of the significance of Christ's redemptive act. The second section presents, in four major aspects, the most fundamental content of Jesus' redemptive act. It understands it as an action of the whole economic Trinity, but which has its foundation in the intradivine kenosis; which reaches its culminating moment in the "hour" that Jesus obediently assumes on the cross, *pro nobis;* and which has as its fruit the complete renewal of the human being -his liberation and divinization-, together with the incorporation in that same redemptive act.

Next come two chapters that we can call ecclesiological. The seventh chapter, *The Holy Spirit in the Church and the world,* which in a way complements what has already been said about pneumatology in the chapter on the Trinity. But here it deals with his economic action in the Church and the world. The themes treated here can be divided into two aspects. A first part, which looks more at the Holy Spirit himself and describes the characteristics that distinguish him: being the explicator of the Son, and his distinctive features as gift, freedom and witness of God. And a second part, which looks more towards the fruits he produces and describes his work -objective and subjective- in the Church, also offering some reflections on his action in the world. It ends with a brief section on the action of the Spirit as he leads human beings back to their origin in the contemplation of the Father. The eighth chapter, entitled *The Church as a "concentrated" response to the*

incarnate Word, sets out the foundations of his ecclesiological thought, which also includes the core of his Mariology. It is divided into two major themes, which also propose two structuring axes of his ecclesiology. The first refers to the Church as a response to the Word of God, which is constituted on the basis of her relationship with Christ. From the male-female symbolism, it characteristically develops what this response means, insofar as it constitutes a mission; then it reviews the nuclear role played by Mary in the Church; and ends by indicating the consequences of understanding the Church as a response (in which there is a variety of responses-vocations), in particular, her character as the spouse and mother of Christ. The second part concretizes historically what has been said, starting from the understanding of the Church as a mediating people, in the midst of other peoples. Along with analyzing the relationship with Israel and with all nations, it focuses on the institutional and mediating character of the Church before the world, always in reference to Christ.

It culminates with the ninth chapter, *Eschatology from Christological Hope, a* theme that is very central to the thought of our author and to which he dedicated the entire volume V of his *Theodramatica*. Divided into four quite extensive sections, the most characteristic aspects of his thought are highlighted here . In the first place, the explicit Christological foundation of all his eschatological thought, since only from the Risen One can we understand the promises made to humanity. Then, two long sections in which Balthasar clearly shows the whole problematic that is present in the traditional -and popular- way of understanding the *novissima* and offers his own vision of this last act of the Savior. It is there that he speculates on a new way of understanding hell (these are only conjectures or possibilities, which can be thought of). And he ends with some reflections on how to understand the fact that humanity can be incorporated into God, without adding anything to God, but also without being superfluous to God: there we encounter the ineffable mystery of the Trinitarian God.

Our work concludes with a sort of epilogue, entitled *Global Appreciation,* in which the totality of the Trilogy -as such- is examined,

in order to better ponder all that has been said and to present the most outstanding contributions of the work as a whole. It also provides some keys for an adequate interpretation of Balthasar and formulates certain questions that arise from his theological approach. It is not a summary of what has already been said, nor -properly- a finished evaluation of his theology -a task to be done by each reader-, but the presentation of some clues for a more fruitful reading of his work as a whole. On the other hand, this global appreciation can also be read now -at the beginning- as a brief introduction to Balthasar's general thought or as a prologue to the nine chapters that follow.

A *Suggested Bibliography* is included at the end of the work, that is, a selection of books and articles -some with a more general theme and others with more specific themes- that can help the reader to continue deepening in Balthasar's theology or in some of his more particular and/or original themes. A couple of readings, both by Balthasar and by other authors, are also recommended for each of the chapters. Like any selection, it is not infallible, and another more appropriate text could always have been chosen. It is only an orientation to some well-written, useful and accessible books and articles that can accompany the reading of Balthasar's work itself, which is certainly the ultimate purpose of this presentation of the central aspects of his theology, beginning with the *Trilogy*.

Preliminary methodological caveats

To present the theological thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar, so that this author can be understood and studied, and also serve as an aid for a deeper reading of his own texts, implies in the first place, to approach his work and its content with a friendly and positive attitude, that is, with a look that tries to honestly understand his project, from its own foundations, pre-understandings and contexts. This does not mean in any way an a-critical attitude, but rather, an attempt to discern and assume his thought, understand it from its foundations, and then expose it with honesty from our own categories of reasoning. And only from there proceeds the moment of evaluation and criticism, which is always a step to understand it better, in its

contributions and limitations. Therefore, although in this text the objections to Balthasar do not stand out, it is not because they do not exist or I do not have them, but because first it is necessary to understand him in his globality and, only after having understood him well, it is possible to seriously evaluate and eventually challenge aspects of him, with all the necessary sharpness. On the other hand, no author is exempt from having errors, flaws, limitations. Neither is Balthasar. Therefore, throughout this work, questions will arise and objections to some aspects of his thought will be raised. In no way can this work be considered a kind of "a-critical reading" with the ideological purpose of strengthening some pretended "Balthasarianism". However, fundamentally and explicitly this is a book that tries to understand Balthasar and proposes to expose his contributions to contemporary theology. And, in any case, my position is clear in this regard and I say it from the beginning: Balthasar's contributions are immensely more numerous than his limitations, or unresolved issues, or reckless assertions, or even things that one may not agree with. We are dealing with a very remarkable author who deserves a recognized place in the history of theology.

This work, which exposes the central aspects of Balthasar's theology, although autonomous and complete in itself, has also been conceived in relation to a previous work that, at a first level of knowledge, introduces the thought of this author and exposes the basic structure of his thought from his *Theological Trilogy*. This is the book *Hans Urs von Balthasar I. Ejes estructurantes de su teología,* Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 2021. However, each book is independent of the other and can be considered two autonomous works. However, as is to be expected, the present text assumes a basic knowledge of the author and his theological proposal, especially of the structure of the *Trilogy* based on the three transcendentals of being, amply exposed in that first work. In this sense, some of the texts indicated in the suggested bibliography may also be of help.

The 16 vols. of the *Theological Trilogy* will be cited in this work according to the following abbreviation: *Gloria, Theodramática, Teodramática, Teológica, Epílogo,* followed by the volume and page.

This work by Balthasar is published in Spanish by Ediciones Encuentro and the German original by the publishing house founded by Balthasar himself, Johannes Verlag (Einsiedeln).

In principle, as bibliographical reference, I always indicate the Spanish edition of Balthasar's works, and when there is no translation, then I indicate the reference of the German original (usually adding the translation of the title into Spanish). And to quote Balthasar's texts, when there is a translation, I always use the translations already published in Spanish. This is especially true for the whole *Trilogy*. However, I have always revised the German original and whenever I have modified any translation to make it closer to the original, I have marked it with an asterisk (*) after the indication of the pages of the Spanish edition in the footnote. All other translations of Balthasar are my own. Biblical quotations, which are not within Balthasar's quotations, are taken from the Spanish Episcopal Conference's translation of the Holy Bible published by the BAC.

This book was made possible thanks to two international sabbatical semesters granted to me by the Pontifica Universidad Católica de Chile, held respectively at the Theologische Fakultät Paderborn (Germany, 2012) and at St. Benet's Hall, University of Oxford (UK, 2019), in addition to a B-scholarship from Stipendienwerk Lateinamerika-Deutschland e.V.

Special words of gratitude go to the St. John Community in Basel (Switzerland), without whose welcome and help - in many ways - this work would not have been possible. To Frau Cornelia Capol (q.e.p.d.), who welcomed me and financed my stays in the Balthasar Archives, receiving from her also invaluable testimonies about Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr . To Claudia Müller , who accompanied and helped me throughout the elaboration of the text with her suggestions and help in the library of the archive. And to so many other people who make it possible for a work like this to be written, to all of whom I keep with indelible gratitude in my heart.

Hans Urs von Balthasar *Trilogy*

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Gloria. A theological aesthetics. Vol. 2: *Estilos eclesiásticos,* Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 1986.

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I. Revelation of the glory of the Father in the manifestation/hiding of the incarnation

The *Theological Trilogy,* structured on the basis of the three transcendentals of being (beauty, goodness and truth), begins with a *Theological Aesthetics* (beauty) because this is precisely the daily experience of every human being (including the experience of God's revelation): what exists comes to meet us and strikes us with its "beauty". Indeed, before we have been able to direct ourselves towards anything that exists, that reality has already appeared to us and placed itself before our eyes. Its beauty - that is, its order, harmony, wholeness, inner splendor - strikes us, invites us to respond and to welcome that manifestation. That is the transcendental experience of beauty. And so it is with the revelation in Jesus Christ. He comes out to meet us with a "form" of life that impacts us and challenges us, since the very irradiation of his existence is indicating -and is- the appearance of an invisible and unseen depth and fullness, but which shines in and from that same form[2] . It is its beauty, but which is open to allow the supernatural to pass through the mundane: thus, the glory of the invisible God is made present in the humble form of Jesus. Hence the whole of Balthasar'*s Theological Aesthetics* is the preparation and a passage from worldly beauty to divine glory. This is the proper context for understanding the theme of the present chapter .[3]

According to what has been said, the last two volumes of *Theological Aesthetics* are thus dedicated "to the theology of the glory of the living God," which is the "point to which the whole work" [of Theological Aesthetics] was directed[4] . It is a matter of exposing the meaning of the *glory* of God in the Old and especially in the New Testament, which is none other than the very divinity of God, expressed here in his desire for covenant, that is, in his revelation. This revelation shows God's free will to relate to human beings, which is not born of any previous communion - because the human being is exactly what God is not - but only of God in his absolute freedom, who pronounces a

word that touches man and places him close to himself. Basically, it is a matter of "the living God in his glory"[5] who communicates himself to us and calls us. Now, the different forms of manifestation and the different concepts for speaking of this divine glory, in each of the biblical writings, become a multiplicity, in which they support one another, but which can be summed up, as their culmination, in the prologue of St. John: all has found its final form in the Word made flesh, in whom "we have beheld his glory: glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father" (Jn 1:14), who fulfills the "'truth' of the 'image'" and the "'grace' of the 'covenant,'" which is the final interpretation of the whole Bible[6] .

In other words, it is about showing how God reveals himself and makes a covenant with human beings in his Son Jesus Christ. In it we discover, then, the Trinity of God and the divine vocation of the human being, . Therein lies the importance of the argument of this first chapter, whose theme appears as the culmination of the whole of *Theological Aesthetics*. We could affirm that it is a chapter on the divinity of God -which in itself is Trinitarian- and, therefore, it is an eminently biblical theme. We will approach it from three aspects: (1) how to perceive and interpret Jesus Christ as the glory of God; (2) the glory in the flesh of Christ; (3) glory as Trinitarian love. These are three aspects that successively, from a biblical theology, will show what Balthasar understands by the glory of God.

Interpretation of the event Christ, glory of the Father

For Balthasar, the core of Christianity is an objective "form" - that of Christ - as an objective manifestation of God, perceived by the faith of the believer[7] . This implies that before reviewing the meaning and content of the biblical concept of glory and its manifestation in Jesus Christ, we must make a hermeneutical introduction, because what faith and the action of the Holy Spirit do is precisely to *interpret* a concrete fact as the manifestation and presence of God. It is possible to perceive the glory of God, which is invisible, transcendent and completely above any human capacity, precisely because certain conditions are given starting from the incarnation of Jesus Christ and,

before that, from the creation realized in Christ. We could say that Balthasar, throughout his work, expresses it under three perspectives.

A concrete and meaningful way

1. The human being and his entire existence is properly a "form"-that is, an order and a structure that, as a whole, is harmonious and beautiful-through which his spirit expresses itself, his freedom acts, he communicates and is perceived by others. Hence, "anthropologically," in order to encounter the human being, God "needed" to assume a concrete form that, on the basis of the *analogia entis* [= analogy of being] proper to creation, was capable of revealing him and at the same time concealing him -due to the tremendous dissimilarity between God and creation-. This could only be adequately given in Christ thanks to the hypostatic union. It is a human existence, which shows itself plausible as a revelation of the glory of God from its historical and concrete form, because it raptures with its light and thus allows that form to be perceived as a manifestation of the Father[8] . This is what, at the beginning of *Theology* II, Balthasar called the Johannine entrance[9] , according to the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John: "For this I was born and for this I came into the world: to bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18:37). Jesus "is the truth inasmuch as he is sent by the Father" in the sense that "he himself is the truth *inasmuch as* he is the one sent [...] for the salvation of the world" (Jn 12:47)[10] . But what is important here is that, being sent by the Father for the salvation of the world, *"as* flesh, that is, as a mortal corporeal man, he is the explanation of the Father"[11] . It is not that Jesus explains it with his external words-although he does that too-but above all with his life, his gestures, his works and, in particular, with his very and complete existence, precisely because he is the Word of the Father made flesh, the Son sent into the world, in such a way that he acts as what he is: the gift of God given to the world made man. However, in order to understand this truth revealed in the flesh, the strength and light of the Holy Spirit, whose mission it is to interpret it, is needed. Therefore, in this concrete man is revealed, first of all, the Trinity itself:

> Thus, the one truth - the explanation of the Father by the Son - which in turn is explained

by the Spirit, is ultimately a Trinitarian truth, but unveiled as *a-letheia* (unveiling), as truth in the world and for the world; and one cannot speak at all of the divine (immanent) Trinity, or even think about it, other than from this truth unveiled for the world, without any separation from it .[12]

In such a way that a first (very central) affirmation is that Jesus, in revealing the Father through the work of the Spirit that accompanies him, reveals at the same time the internal reality of God, which is Trinitarian. We will return to this in the next chapter. With regard now to our theme, for John, when he speaks of "truth" he is not pointing to something theoretical, abstract or rational-although it can have some of those aspects as well-but he is referring to the Word made flesh and, for that very reason, to the authentic presence of God, that is to say, to the glory of God[13] . This is why Balthasar says that "this contemplated truth is nothing other than what we in the first part of this trilogy have called 'glory': the presentation of God, without worldly analogy, in the world [...] Both words, glory and truth, ultimately express the same thing: the explanation of the Father through the Son"[14] . But it is also very important to understand that Jesus, as an explanation of the Father, is at the same time an explanation of himself, as the only-begotten Son of the Father and, as such, he himself is the truth and he himself is the glory of the Father. Not being "the same" with the Father, nevertheless, they are "the same," and therefore he can manifest it, though always through his flesh and under the conditions of the flesh. Thus, the Son reveals the goodness or love of the Father through his life, death and resurrection by which he is manifesting that God is essentially love. Thus, when God sends his Son to reveal to us that he loves us and makes present in the Son his own glory and, with it, gives us the truth that is the very existence of the Son, then the Father, in the Son, is revealing in depth that God is love and donation and that he gives us the grace of his truth; and all this is the *glory* of God that we can perceive in a Trinitarian way in the flesh of the Son.

Jesus, as a concrete form, is the condition of possibility of revelation because the beautiful form not only produces admiration and rapture, but "refers back to the radically unquestionable foundation [...], to the foundation that is not only hidden in the form, but at the same time is

revealed in its concealment. Indeed, we know that "in the fact that being can be made present and unveiled in the entity" and in the fact that the unrepeatable singularity of an essence makes the unrepeatable singularity of being in general shine forth, therein lies "the foundation of the revelation of God in the singular figure of Christ and the transcendental possibility for man to perceive it," but on condition that "the form can be read as *sensible* form and as expression"[15] . And, in fact, , this is what happens in the case of Jesus because the form, by presenting itself and offering itself surprisingly as a gift, implies that it is a grace in the sense of a benevolence that shows itself as something proper to the thing itself. It exists as a gift. Indeed, the word "grace", etymologically comes from the root *rejoice* (as the fruit of the beauty that is manifested). In this sense, for the Greek world, grace included the idea of divine favor. *Charis* (= grace) would then mean due thanks, since the beautiful "provokes" anyone who can perceive it[16] . And that is a *dia-logos,* a dialogue, which supposes then the existence of a word:

> Where there is dialogue there must be *word.* It makes its appearance from hiding where form can be understood as expression: as a background that manifests itself, and such understanding presupposes freedom (not only reaction to forms like the animal), intellection *(intel-lectus),* and even more: readiness to welcome the manifestation of the form, "faith" that the expression of the foundation is true . [17]

This is even better understood in the light of the transcendental beauty. The beautiful in its manifestation always addresses someone - convokes, provokes, calls- from a common, transcendental language that tells him something and invites him to something; but, as we have just said, that language always speaks from the reading of its empirical form. The interesting thing about all this is that the human being is capable of understanding that language that lives on the background of the common thing, a universal language in spite of the fact that it is expressed in particular words. In this way, "the form and the word in the form is an awakening and an appeal; awakening the freedom to attend to the appeal that comes from the form"[18] . And this form, which has an inner power, still guarantees freedom because it never forces anyone. It illuminates the transcendental word and, therefore, the whole meaning of that word, and opens a space of

infinite dialogue, a dialogue that means an exchange of existences. Thus, in Jesus, the human being is touched by a you who calls him specifically and by name, and this chosen one is transformed by the same vocation/task received. With this, the one who has been called is carried away by this encounter that has a universal character: "the chosen one is inserted in the sphere of the transcendent logos" that embraces all reality and founds every being[19] . With this we can appreciate the significant force of the concrete form assumed by Jesus to manifest the glory of the Father.

> Form is unity that gives meaning to a plurality of organs; the dramatic form of Christ in its fundamental articulations (incarnation, proclamation of the kingdom and preparation of the Church, passion, union with the dead, resurrection and union with the Father, return to the beginning of history) is the simple self-presentation of a single attitude that is the efficient expression of God's love for the world . [20]

3. But here a question arises: "how can an individual destiny be offered in this way as absolute and relevant for all without being degraded from the general horizon of understanding" to one situation among many others?[21] . The only way for that concrete figure to effectively possess a universal value -valid in every horizon- is precisely in its capacity to unfold that general human horizon -configured by a series of enigmas that torment human life (injustice, suffering), and at the same time values and joys that also give meaning, at least partially, to life- and at the same time overcome it[22] . This, then, is indeed the general human horizon that has opened up in the life of Jesus and that, with his resurrection from the dead, has been surpassed in the direction of a transcendent point and, from there, an interpretative illumination of the whole horizon of human destiny can be delineated. It has been his death and resurrection, that is, the assumption of all that is human, and then transcending it in the direction of God -because it came from God-, which makes it have a universal value, or in other words, an eschatological value. This also implies that it is the Holy Spirit, after the resurrection, who universalizes in its effects the whole life of Christ and his action for us. There we find the admirable paradox of Jesus Christ as the incarnation of the Word, because "the historical-factual remains not only the starting point, but the permanent point of reference:

The insurmountable paradox consists in the fact that it is precisely in this contingent element that the definitive Logos is at work, enveloping everything factual and everything ideal. With the extreme point of the factual the sphere of the eternal touches the sphere of the temporal, and only from here can the definitive gift of meaning extend over all that is factual, over the entire history of the world and of humanity. What is unique in its historicity must simultaneously be unique in its divinity, for otherwise what is presumably historical-unique returns to the mythical or falls into the purely symbolic [...].Therefore it is not enough that the historical fact expresses an interpretation of the world that deserves our attention and that can subsist alongside other donations of meaning, but it must also appear here with complete clarity such a donation of meaning that in it (in spite of its a posteriori and historical character) one can deduce *a priori* its unsurpassable character (its every-more-ever-more)[23] .

This incomparable paradox of the Word made flesh, where in the contingent the definitive is expressed, supposes however that this contingent be contemplated within its finite history *in its totality,* since only from it, as a global form, "can this phenomenon be witnessed" "as the unsurpassable that *must* exist if God, the only one, is to be implied in this unique event"[24] . That is the mystery of Christ - intra-historical synthesis between particular and universal - made possible by the *analogia entis* which allows the ever greater totality of God to be expressed in the fragment of the world because this world has been created precisely as a manifestation of the glory of God .[25]

It has a language

Jesus Christ, as the exegete of the Father, in his humanity possesses a capacity for language that allows God to express himself precisely through that humanity.

Expression, image and human word of God. So, if the language of Jesus is that of every concrete - corporeal-spiritual - man, we must look at his words and gestures in their own human, concrete, vital simplicity and there we find the "explanation" of the Father. For Balthasar, Jesus is both an expression and an image and a word, which are three forms of "speaking" of every created being in an ascending gradation of essence. From them Jesus explains the Father. He briefly recalls them.
1. Expression. Every entity naturally has the capacity to manifest its essence. But also, all things created by God, since they have been created as an expression of the Son, who in turn is an expression of the Father, along with expressing something of themselves, can also

say something about God[26] . 2. *Image.* Every human being, as a spirit, starting from the senses and with the imaginative power and memory, gives meaning to the image that she elaborates and thereby interprets it as a phenomenon in the direction of the entity. Because it is not possible to know without images[27] . 3. *Word.* Self-consciousness "awakens" primarily "in itself with the strength to interpret an image that manifests itself as the call of a you", that is, its mother, "whereby behind the world of the image the world of being is clarified in its totality"[28] . With this ontic "clarification" the human being interprets the image in the direction of what appears and the self finds there the freedom to be able to read this world as effectively bearing an adequate meaning. Thus, even if the human being is initiated into language from outside (by his culture), he is preceded by "the intimate impulse to spiritual expression"[29] which is given to him together with existence and is identical with his being living as spirit. And since ultimately all creation bears the traces of the Logos - God's expression - every being called into existence is in itself capable of expression, and the human being is capable of a word, which could then also be a word of the Logos.

Now, what is proper to human being and human language is also found in Jesus. In fact, the three forms are affirmed in him, but with an important difference, that is, in him the three ways of "speaking" are intimately implied:

> He is the "expression" of God (Heb. 1:3), the "image" of the invisible God (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4) and the "word" of God (Jn. 1:1,14; Rev. 19:13). Here no gradation dominates, but rather the three designations are equal next to each other, or rather, one within the other. Everything in the incarnate Word is an expression of the Father in the Holy Spirit (which is why it is comprehensible only as an expression in the Holy Spirit); everything in him is image, insofar as in his condition of worldly image his condition of divine image is immediately legible (in the Johannine "seeing") and thus his essential reference to the Father; everything in him is word, which essentially alludes to one who speaks. He is both the one and the other .[30]

Since being expression, image and word are unified in Jesus in such a unique way, something is given that is most particular and proper to Jesus as an explanation of the Father: the three concepts used-expression, image and word-contain in Jesus both a difference and a concordance that is admirable and indecipherable for us. Difference,

because he, although he authentically expresses the Father and is his own Word, nevertheless, he is not the Father and does not possess a personal identity with the Father. But on the other hand there is at the same time a marvelous concordance in that, despite the infinite distance between God and creature, Jesus - as *man* - expresses the Father authentically and truly. "Whoever has seen me [= this man] has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). "The language of the flesh is not for the divine Word an approximate, but an adequate expression, which, however, does not eliminate the distance and, therefore, maintains the distinction between idol and icon"[31] . But we must also say that, although the revelation of the Father through the Son and the Spirit is perfectly concordant, this does not mean that the human being can understand it "in its true concordance"[32] . We always remain in the darkness of faith. This is the paradox of authentic knowledge by faith, despite the marvelous possibility of human language to be the word of God.

Use of symbols and metaphors. Having established that God can truly speak through the humanity of Jesus -and in fact has done so- because in Jesus there is an ineffable concordance between the expression and the expressed, Balthasar also accepts -being aware of its problematicity and limitation- the use of two complementary concepts to refer to Jesus: symbol and metaphor. If originally a symbol is a "sign of recognition and credibility", "the revelation of Jesus can be defined entirely as a symbol, since the one who expresses himself (the Father) is perfectly recognized in the expression (the Son)". Thus it can be freely accepted by faith. On the other hand, "with the application of 'metaphor' to the Christian revelation we should be cautious"[33] . If it is understood as "a translation into another form of language", it can very well be used in the sense that in Jesus, through the light of the worldly being, shines the light of the subsistent, that is, here "it makes use of the spiritually comprehensible images of creatureliness, but granting by grace to the believer the interior light to understand the parabolic image beyond its limits, in its archetypal sense"[34] .

All this language of the incarnate Logos is under the gaze and

understanding of a theological aesthetic, which is also a Theo-logic*:* a saying about God. It is the conviction that human reality, insofar as it is beautiful, can become an adequate vehicle of divine glory when God freely wants to use it to manifest himself[35] . However, it must be remembered that, although revelation in Jesus is given by his word and by his action, there will always remain within him a space of silence, which is the distance between God and the creature.

Hermeneutical criteria

At various points in the *Trilogy,* Balthasar refers to questions of biblical hermeneutics and the intrinsic relationship between exegesis and dogmatics[36] . Having established the incarnational principle just detailed, he also specifies some hermeneutical elements that make it possible to speak truthfully of the Trinitarian God from a human language. The five hermeneutical criteria mentioned above are important for our theme, in which, in any case, we must never lose sight of the fact that in every *similarity* there must always be a greater *dissimilarity*. A step-by-step development can be seen here:

Jesus Christ can be "the truth" "only because everything true in the world 'has its consistency' in him (Col 1:17), which again presupposes that he personalizes in him the *analogia entis,* he is in finite being the adequate showing, giving and affirmation of God"[37] . This means that God manifests himself *completely* in his Son and Word and is identical with him. And this is possible because the creative act has been framed within the Son's act of generation - of which he is its created reflection - in such a way that the Son can also then assume that creation in a kenotic way. In this way his existence -and his human "word" in it- is transformed into a true and constant expression of the Father's permanent generation and donation, thus making it possible to read and contemplate the Trinity in all its existence; but always -it goes without saying- with the help of faith and of the Holy Spirit .[38]

2. If Jesus Christ is the concrete *analogia entis* which in a special way refers to transcendence, then this transcendence

is manifested in Jesus Christ in the sense that God's perfect freedom is revealed as an inner vitality, in which the transcendentals are identified with his identity: there is no possibility of distinguishing the life of the three persons with respect to their essence. This is not a

fourth thing, common to the three persons, but their eternal life itself in its processions, so that the "being" of God (thought of as substance) does not manifest itself in true-good-good-pretty, but the manifestation of the intradivine life (the processions) as such is identified with the transcendentals (identical with each other). In that centrally dominates the "good"; giving-itself and saying-itself culminate in the absolute giving-itself, in such a way that all para-itself has always already been overcome in a para-ti .[39]

In this way, it should be clear that the *analogia entis* in Christ is not simply with being, nor even with the transcendentals of being, but with the Trinity as such. This is why Jesus can also be an authentic expression of the Trinitarian condition of God, which is reflected in his being-for-others and in his total dependence on the Father, as an expression of God who is love, that is, constant total self-giving.

3. So, if Jesus is the truth because he reveals Trinitarian love, this means that the absolute is becoming present in a finite form. But this, which seems impossible - and in fact is impossible - could only be realized if his person were able to unify all that is realized in the Old Testament and recapitulate - according to the New Testament - all that is good and true in the world, all of which cannot be constructed from the world, but only from God. Well, that is precisely the claim of Jesus, which is verified both in the unity of the *Gestalt* (= form) of Jesus, in which the believer sees no contradiction, and also in Jesus' deepest conviction that he has been sent by the Father and is anointed with the Holy Spirit. In that figure, which harmonizes all that seems contradictory, "the love that is revealed can [then] appear as unity [and] worthy of faith"[40] , and its existence be an indicative relationship to the Father. But, in order to understand it, one will always need the healthy and pure eyes of faith capable of seeing.

4. Now, since the authentic understanding of who Jesus is is given only to faith[41] , Jesus will use a language that will help him in the whole process of faith-expression, a language that can be defined as "parabolic" (Jn 16:25). Parable, in the Old Testament, "meant wisdom discourse, which as such was often pronounced as an obscure saying, in need of explanation, but not to hide the meaning, but - especially in the case of the prophets - to provoke the listener, so to speak, to stimulate his attention, to make what was said more penetrating"[42] . With this, the meaning of Jesus' language is clear: he tries to make

himself understandable through images, but seeking two things. On the one hand, since the images were basically understandable for his listeners, he was appealing to the daily experiences of human beings so that, from them, they could transcend to the universal truth. There was a language already prepared for to be used with this new meaning. But, on the other hand, this parabolic language aroused in the audience a longing to transcend beyond the literal meaning of the discourse and, therefore, it also included an openness to seek in and with faith, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the deepest meaning of what was said. And furthermore, all this was adequately prepared thanks to the fact that the spiritual being has been created in the image and likeness of God and therefore "possesses for himself" experiences "of rational and ethical discernment, recalls things of human experience, which already transcends the purely factual by pointing to norms of universal validity." "Here we find prepared for him a developed language which Jesus can take for granted and use with a view to the higher transcendence intended by him"[43] .

5. Finally, Sacred Scripture, as the definitive word of God, must be interpreted on the basis of the Holy Spirit, who explains the works and words of Jesus and thus becomes the guarantor of the correctness of these interpretations. But at the same time, since the word has always been expressed by means of a witness to that same word and, furthermore, since in every word - which is always addressed to a listener - the response of the same listener is implied, then the word itself necessarily has a dialogical essence. It follows then that, both in the hagiographers and in today's believing community, "the witnessing written word is not extrinsic to the witnessed word of God," and although "the one and the other are not simply identical, the witnessing word always makes use of the witnessed word, in order to make itself present in this for a believer"[44] . Thus Scripture is "spirit and life" (Jn 6:63) always open to be explained and applied .[45]

The Word made flesh reveals the glory of God

Glory as God's majesty, in the Old Testament

If, as we have said, "the idea of divine glory"[46] -which is nothing

other than the "divinity of God"[47] - is a notion that is sustained by many biblical themes and concepts, in order to understand what Balthasar understands by the "glory" of God in the Old Testament - which translates the Hebrew term *Kabod*-, it is necessary to go through the various aspects that Balthasar himself highlights throughout volume VI of *Gloria*. The sum of all of them will express with greater truth what he wants to reflect. Balthasar wishes to establish that the term *kabod* is not simply a new or more refined way of saying beauty. Much more profoundly, it is first and foremost a self-definition that God gives of Himself - from His action - but in which as a fundamental hermeneutical criterion "all aspects must be understood in their complementarity and reciprocal interpenetration"[48] . Six different ways of expressing this idea complement each other throughout the Hebrew Bible (and its translation from the LXX).

Glory as mysterious irradiation. The Hebrew concept of God's *kabod* finds its origin in a fundamental human experience: each person who presents himself, not only shows himself, but also transmits a power "that creates around himself a magic circle", which envelops the subject and those around him, which "is as useful to keep others away from his own sphere of life as to retain them in his power". One can speak of a mysterious "center of forces of the person"[49] . Thus, "in the human realm, *kabod* means 'the weight and force that radiate from a being and thus constitute its manifestation' (Buber)"[50] , but "one qualifies as *kabod* not only this mysterious outward irradiation, but the 'radiating center' of man himself, his self in his 'consideration' before himself and before others". In the light of that experience, for the Old Testament it was then possible "to speak analogically of a *kabod* of God" in the sense of the power of this God, of his "'weight' and subjugating and fascinating importance," reflecting his majesty and thus his absoluteness and glory[51] . Here we have to remember that in the biblical realm there are no "'purely spiritual' revelations of God", but at the same time these revelatory forms - suitable for sensible human perception - are also never, as such, "the majesty (*kabod*) of God himself", although they are inseparable from him and in relation to God because "the 'weight' that imposes itself is that of the subject,

and, therefore, the very divinity of God"[52] .

The LXX translated the Hebrew *kabod* by δόξα, but they also used that same Greek concept to translate a number of other similar concepts that "designate elevation and glory," thus maintaining the basic meaning of *kabod*, they also give it a broader meaning in their Greek translation by δόξα[53] . On the other hand, it must be taken into account that "*doxa* means in extrabiblical Greek the opinion that I have or that others have of me, ultimately even the good name, the fame; but in no way does it seem to connote the sensible splendor that is essential in the Hebrew *kabod*." So, although the two meanings do not exactly coincide, it seemed to the Greek translator that "the original dimension of fame" (Greek) coincided well with the essentials of the splendor and majesty of the Hebrew concept[54] . All this is implying that the main aspect of the *kabod-doxa* concept has to do with the reference to who is behind it, rather than with its sensible expressions.

2. *Image of glory in the human being.* The created and in particular the human being is the image *of* God, and therefore the biblical concept of image is linked to that of glory and also allows us to understand what "glory of God" means.

> The "image" is the second of the three key ideas of biblical aesthetics and is, above all, in a specific relationship with that which God has formed, with the creature. Undoubtedly, this is only comprehensible in its character of image, starting from its origin from God and, therefore, also from its path towards God; however, it has been granted a space to be-in-itself before God, precisely a being in front of God, to be a "world" in the presence of God. Only when this being-in-itself of the image has been duly considered can the third key-word follow: grace, the offer of the covenant, the initiative of divine love before its formed image. In all this becomes definitively visible, not only what God's glory is, but also why God dared to make the image and where this finds its fullness .[55]

That the human being is the image of God means, among many other things, that in some way God is also reflected and present in him with his sovereign power and majesty, which is why the human being can establish a covenant with God - if God wills it - and in some way he also makes present to the world the glory of that same God. It is also important and significant to note that in the human being sin has not completely destroyed this image, and therefore the human person, in

spite of his frailties, continues to be an expression of the glory of God. All this indicates the immense paradox that is the human being, who, being created, can express the glory of God, and being a sinner, does not for this reason completely lose the image of God that he essentially bears, and thus continues to show something of the glory of God. And all this is possible only insofar as the human being exists in relation to God. With all this we can perceive that there is an indissoluble relationship between image and glory.

Glory as covenant and grace. The human being, as an image of God, possesses a reflection of his origin, which gives him a space of freedom to communicate, but at the same time, leaves him an openness and a need for complementation, which necessarily has to turn towards his own divine origin, which manifests itself to him during his existence. This is why God enters into relationship with his creature, in a concrete way, with his covenant. Thus, to the beauty of his glory and the truth of his presence is now added goodness, which manifests itself as grace, as covenant, and especially in his fidelity to that same covenant, which, moreover, is of his most absolute and sovereign initiative[56] . The glory of Yahweh is then understood here as his total revelation of the God of grace, who has opened and placed at the disposal of all humanity his own divine goods. Thus, "the whole revelation of God is grace". This means that the human being, the recipient of grace, gains access to God's space "beyond all his qualities and all his possibilities" and can thus dwell with God[57] . This is exactly what is expressed - with different concepts - throughout the Old Testament: *Berit,* which means covenant, as a bilateral covenant that rests on the complete unilaterality of the choice and the total obedience of the response; *hesed, hen, rajamin,* which is the favor, benevolence, mercy that God has with us; *sedek, sedaka,* which is the upright behavior in faithfulness, on God's part; *mispat,* as right that is imposed as salvation; *emet, emunah,* which means its truthfulness; and *shalom,* which is the pacification of the salvific dominion as perpetual well-being. In the sum and complementarity of all these concepts it becomes clear that God's glory is manifested in a very concrete way in the midst of men, but at the same time, since the one who thus

manifests himself is the Lord - who is opposed to everything created - then his character of grace becomes even more evident .[58]

Glory as faithfulness in the midst of unfaithfulness. The meaning of God's glory can also be recognized from its opposite: man's sin. Balthasar expresses it in the following way:

> Only *history,* which manifests man's sin and brings God face to face with the reality of the transgression of the covenant, shows what the glory of God concretely is [...] In reference to the "covenant," sin manifests itself substantially and formally as infidelity, whatever the specific concrete form it assumes.
>
> This means, in the first place, that for Israel the central idea of evil - whatever the ways in which its contours are forged and peripherally defined - originates in its fundamental experience of God. Moreover, the exceptionality of their idea of evil is nothing other than the negative reflection and, therefore, the counter-proof of the exceptionality of their conception of God . [59]

This means that, although evil is born from within the human being, it is not there that one understands what evil is in its true depth, but, on the contrary, one discovers its deepest reality only by observing what God's behavior has been with the human being, that is, by observing that evil, in the last analysis, means a negative response to the covenant offered. From this, one can see God's glory reflected in two aspects: (1) "When man has gone completely wrong, the story of God's covenant becomes a story of God with himself". (2) And, as a consequence of that, "God wants to build himself a ladder of men chosen beforehand", patriarchs and prophets, from whom - in their words, in their actions and even in their sufferings - it will be glimpsed, once again, what the glory of God means . [60]

Thus, for example, the two great founders, Abraham and Moses, were characterized by their obedience, in terms of self-understanding of themselves and of the people. Prophecy was characterized fundamentally by its total availability to listen to the word of God, which is another way of obeying; where the prophet even has to incarnate in his own life the feelings and attitudes of God towards the people. This is especially characteristic in Hosea, where through his own life the glory of God is expressed in an impressive way, as forgiving love, precisely because he is God and not man (even if this love appears humiliating and absurd before the world) (Hos 1-3). It

can also be expressed - among the prophets - in the radicality of God's call, which must be answered with the same radicality in the surrender of one's own life to God, who confiscates his life completely. This is seen, for example, in Isaiah and Jeremiah. Ezekiel, on the other hand, shows a wonderful and grand theophany of God's glory, which contrasts with the sin and humiliation of the people, but which ends in a great promise of future purification that is born exclusively from the holiness of God himself and by his own glory among the people. Finally, we find Lamentations and Job himself, where the incomprehensibility of suffering refers to the absolute mystery of God. As can be seen, in each of these characters the glory of God is manifested in different aspects of his majesty, but they all coincide in revealing the fact that God does not forget his people, nor less of the covenant sealed with them nor of his own absolute fidelity . God's glory is expressed here as that saving faithfulness in the midst of human infidelity. He is "God, and not man" (Hos 11:9) .[61]

5. *Failure and silence as a confession of the immensity of God's glory*. The historical failure of the covenant and the non-fulfillment of the promises as expected, that is, the fact that salvation did not come as expected and that the people seemed to enter a "long twilight," was simply showing the inability of the people to be faithful to the covenant, but it also aroused the ever new and unexpected manifestation of the glory of God. That is, the historical and painful vicissitudes of the people finally showed more clearly the ever greater and unexpected aspect of God's glory . [62]

> At the end of the long twilight, the seals will be broken for an instant in Jesus, the Christ, who brings to completion what was impossible in the Old Testament, by revealing the glory of the Father in the abandonment of the Son. But for this definitive salvific sign to be able to be erected on and within the history of the world, and also understood as such (within the scandal), it was necessary precisely the long twilight with its objective of marking a distance: failure and opening at the same time. Failure, insofar as it is a forced confession that man is not capable of synthesizing the idea of the alliance and its historical reality. Openness, because [...] without messianism, apocalyptic and sapiential theology there would be no New Testament: together they concur to constitute an indispensable mediation, insofar as they allow the historical form of Israel to transcend itself in three directions .[63]

Indeed, in the midst of the failure of the People as God's *partner*, Jewish theology tried to base its hope on the coming of a messiah, or

on the apocalyptic intervention of God, or on a sapiential form of life, but all of these, insofar as they claimed to be absolute, were transformed into human *hybris* and became antagonistic to one another. They must be understood simply as the "means" and the "climate" in which the incarnation of the Son could take place with its unique specificity, in order to show that God is *unique* in his action and in his glory.

6. *The silence of God as an expression of his glory.* The same must be said of those long final centuries in which God is silent. There we can experience something that is extremely important, although hard: "God is free to speak or to be silent, to act or to remain inactive"[64] .

> During this meditative pause, the glory of God-the evidence of his sovereignty-is deeply hidden. The passionate search in all directions for glory is a sign of this concealment [...] But now it was no longer at all clear whether the silence that was taking place had anything to do with this newness (certainly not this silence was not a salvific action), or whether instead the address[65] had not been lost by unknown paths.

That is why the people sought, as ways out, strict fidelity to the Law or animal sacrifices, which, however, did not break the silence of God. And they also failed to resolve the question of "what content and what form to give to all this time empty of salvific history, since no salvific act of God articulates it with its insertion in history, and since the eternity of God no longer leaves any trace here"[66] . And yet, this aspect opened up a fundamental element of the divine glory : silence, which can be interpreted as greatness or as ineffability. With this, the way in which the glory will appear in the New Testament was also announced.

New Testament

It pointed mysteriously to the New Testament. Having explained from six different angles what is understood by the glory of God in the Old Testament, Balthasar culminates vol. VI of *Gloria* with a brief section entitled *Argumentum ex prophetia* (= The Argument *from* Prophecy)[67] , in which he expounds the "meaning of this history of the covenant, and of the sovereignty of God that is manifested and at work in it"[68] . In order to properly interpret the concept of glory in the New Testament, we must understand well the relationship between Old and

New Testament, which is nothing other than to affirm the "prophetic character of the whole history of Israel" . [69]

> That history is the history of the covenant between the chosen people and God, and its greatness, its ruin and its overcoming are moving towards an inconceivable and unimaginable fulfillment. But one cannot understand the fulfillment without understanding at the same time *what* is being fulfilled. This point cannot be stressed enough today: Christianity cannot be understood without the Old Testament; any attempt to explain the figure of Christ, his message and his impact on the world is inevitably doomed to failure if it fails to accurately assess all this in its relationship of distance and closeness with respect to the Old Testament . [70]

Christianity can be authentically understood only if it is viewed from the perspective of the Old Testament, that is, from the history of Israel. But on condition that: (1) each of the particular forms that were developing during the whole history of Israel remain always open to a point that cannot be measured from those same forms; (2) we recognize that Jesus does not live thinking and trying to fulfill in the first place each of those particular forms, but his own inner mission; and (3) "in the subsequent interpretation of this center"-which is Jesus-we come "to clarify that the center is confirmed as such a center" because all those previous forms have crystallized around him, and only in this way have they all acquired "their conforming point of reference thanks to this process of crystallization"[71] . Indeed, the fulfillment in Jesus is not just one among many previous fulfillments, but an essential step from the time of promise to the time of fulfillment. Now this is undoubtedly an object of faith and must be looked at from a theological point of view, which is the only way to discover in the coming of Jesus the unfathomable mystery of the Word made flesh. This is not to say that the Old Testament is outdated or out of date, but simply that all "the figures of the Old Testament unite to form a kind of arrow that indicates the direction of this path" which, although the goal far surpasses the figures, equally this path indicates a direction in that which it fulfills and also in that which fails and is unfaithful[72] . Therefore, the Old Testament could only be temporary . [73]

All this allows us to understand that the manifestation of the glory of God in the six aspects that we have reviewed (glory as the majesty of God), being true, is still that arrow that indicates a reality that, in its

true magnitude and in its profound mystery has not yet been revealed in its complete form. That is precisely the unprecedented novelty of Jesus, who by his life and words announces the coming of the reign of God that is fulfilled by his death and resurrection .[74]

An unprecedented novelty. In fact, coming to the New Testament, we discover that "everything that until now could be observed and said in isolation is now so concentrated in a single point that one is left breathless and speechless before such unity"[75] . All the signs, concepts, times, images, silences and words of the Old Testament, which tried to express and were a manifestation of the glory of God, now flow - unexpectedly and surprisingly - into an immense fullness, into that one and only one in whom dwells the fullness of the divinity (Col 1:19), so that in him divine image and divine glory are identified in a totally unprecedented way. Consequently, this "one" brings transcendental aesthetics to an authentic fullness and surprising novelty:

> The higher and more valuable a "form" is, the more transparent it becomes to the light of being. But this general "metaphysical" law is fulfilled in the unique event, whose initiative is based on the absolute freedom of God, in such a disproportionate way that it is radically put in crisis: the One whose name is Jesus Christ has to descend into that which is totally contrary to his majesty as Lord, into the night of God's abandonment and into hellish and formless chaos in order to be and to erect, beyond all that man can understand by form, that imperishable and indivisible form which unites God and the world in a new and eternal covenant[76] .

This is the great novelty that one discovers when looking at the *glory* of God in the New Testament: it appears under a "form" so surprisingly novel and unexpectedly disproportionate to what it wants to express, that it puts in crisis everything that came before. But at the same time it shows both the possibilities of the created image of God - that is, the human being - and the freedom of God to express himself in the way most suited to his own reality; however, what this *form* expresses is, above all, the fact that in God there is such an unexpectedly novel reality called *love*, a reality that is found within himself, from always, and which has therefore made him express himself in a way that, although it was fragmentarily announced, on the other hand is completely new and unexpected as such. From this affirmation, Balthasar sets forth four theological principles, fundamental for

discovering this glory in the New Testament .[77]

1. In order to understand this "form" -which is entirely new-, one must necessarily possess "eyes of faith" (Augustine)[78] , united to a form of life that is apt for understanding this kenotic, simple and poor form of the manifestation of the glory of God. A simplicity of life is required, which allows us to understand the simplicity of God's revelation. This is required by the characteristics of the theological object observed, which is God in his interpellation to us.

2. Since "what appears to us as 'accidental historical truth,' is revelation of his absolute freedom, such as it is *in himself:* as freedom of his eternal self-giving by absolutely gratuitous and unlimited love"; then, presupposing faith, theology can never be essentially a science with a deductive method, but, first of all, it will use an inductive method, since it seeks to understand all the lines of convergence from that nucleus and focal point that has appeared and from which all the glory of God is reflected. "If the gaze is not directed towards the center and from it the whole is contemplated, nothing on its margins is comprehensible"[79] .

3. "The supreme self-revelation of the glory of God in the New Testament" can only be discovered as such if one recognizes at its center the unfathomable beauty of the free love of God who gives himself in his human simplicity to justify mankind[80] . Indeed, if the Old Testament *kabod* "is fulfilled only in Christ who represents 'the glory of God' insofar as he is the perfect image of the glory of the Father," then "the *kabod* has received this central point, this concrete form, this name" (K. Barth)[81] . Thus Jesus is the compendium of divine perfection made visible, so that from him, the splendor of God's glory in its human manifestation can be described. And since the glory of God has been revealed in this incarnate Son, this glory in turn reveals the Trinitarian being of God: God is one and totally free, but at the same time, free also to be *other.* Thus God's glory can be described as love, which in turn allows for the response - on the part of creation - to that glorification/love.

4. The fulfillment of the Scriptures was not calculable, not even from the multiple promises; it has been an overabundant novelty[82] .

Therefore, in order to understand the concept of glory in the New Testament, we cannot simply look for this "term" in the New Testament books, where the concept had also been depotentiated with the passing of the centuries. In the New Testament, and particularly in the Synoptics, we must look for a new content, born exclusively from the person of Jesus, from the weight of his presence and authority. And only after this can we return to the word "glory", as John uses it with all its broad and new meaning. The concept of glory has thus acquired, in the New Testament, a whole new content, which is purely Christological, and that is what is central.

The weight of Jesus as the glory that synthesizes and surpasses all of the above.

In the New Testament everything is synthesized in Jesus. But this was not the fruit of human reflection or deduction, but simply that, at a certain moment in history, we have been struck from the depths by an unprecedented event: Jesus of Nazareth. With Jesus the presence of the *kabod,* which had accompanied the people in various ways in the Old Testament, gave way, in a completely new way, to the *weight of God* in the person of Jesus[83] . This Jesus, who is the synthesis of every word, law, proclamation, where everything is related to everything: either it is discovered all at once, as a whole, from the core of his message; or nothing has been discovered or understood. This is the great novelty and the great difficulty of the New Testament: "the synthesis is not a 'discovery' but a gift, and this character of love freely given emerges more and more clearly in the reflection of the Church as the point around which everything crystallizes is more and more confirmed as the right one"[84] . The place of synthesis is unrepeatable and, at the same time, gives an unexpected light. This essential characteristic of the glory of God in the New Testament can be well understood from three moments: (1) the inability of the Old Testament to delineate Jesus; (2) the claim of Jesus himself; and (3) what the passion shows as the definitive expression of his life.

1. *Inability of the Old Testament.* "The Old Testament is and remains the theological and therefore epistemological introduction to the

understanding of the New Testament. It could be recognized as a "call to its fulfillment", but where - and this is central to its correct hermeneutics - it is "incapable of determining in the least the form of the fulfillment that its entire structure demanded". Everything is understood only from Christ:

> From its fulfillment in Christ it is possible to show retrospectively that precisely this form, and only this form, corresponds to its postulates and, at the same time, it is possible to show that such a form could not have been completely determined from the fragments available in the Old Testament . [85]

The center of the whole event of salvation is Jesus, and only after his resurrection, that is, having passed through his passion and death, the innumerable fragments of the announcements and all the aspects of his life were ordered in a new unity that allowed not only to understand the totality, but also each of its fragments, in their authentic meaning: he is the Word of God, who has made his dwelling among us to establish himself in the world with salvific efficacy[86] . Thus, the community, full of faith and the Holy Spirit, was able to "perceive" the figure, not simply of a man, but of the one who perfectly fulfills the covenant, since he becomes the mediator between God and the people and assumes the guilt and punishment of the people. This last figure was announced in the prophets, and especially in the servant of Yahweh, who included in himself the promised figures of the mediator, the priest and the victim. But this integration was only possible in the New Testament - where death was conquered - since in the Old Testament it was not possible for a man to fulfill the covenant with full fidelity and the Word could not simply act in this way, but needed human freedom, if a true human salvation was expected[87] . And "the unheard of happened", that is, that "the original meaning and content of the first covenant re-emerged in an ultimate form to be adapted and transferred in its originality to the new form"[88] . Therefore, Jesus, being the new way - unimagined and eschatological - of presenting himself salvificly as the God of glory, is then the one who manifests in a new and definitive way that same glory of God.

2. *The claim of Jesus.* Contemporary exegesis has well understood that in the New Testament, and particularly in the Gospels, there is an

irreducible interpenetration between the event that was Jesus and its interpretation by the Church. This means that in order to recognize the authentic truth of Jesus, the faith of the primitive community was necessary, but it also means that there must have been something quite special in Jesus, which justly allowed - in a credible and sensible way - such faith in him to emerge. This is what allowed the Jesus who announced something to become - with full consequence - the Jesus who was announced. The question, then, about the legitimacy of this continuity finds its answer when we ask ourselves about the conditions that must have been verified for such continuity to be possible[89] . Balthasar, who knows this problem very well, affirms:

> Certainly this demands a continuity; we can imagine it as formal and apparently empty as we wish: precisely this *formal* element, *that* is, Jesus' claim concerning his absolute authority, is the background that remains in any formulation of content, the background from which the formulations emerge, a background that in the interpretations is not hidden but appears together with them, and for which there is no more pertinent denomination than that of the original *kabod*: the incomparable weight of the one who is present here, whether or not he expressly pronounces the ἐγώ εἰμι .[90]

What has allowed such continuity has been precisely "the incomparable weight" with which Jesus presented himself before his auditors. This is the way in which in the New Testament the glory of God appears in Jesus. This is what has also been called "implicit Christology" and which Balthasar approaches here from the point of view of the theme that interests him[91] . In fact, it is well known that, after his death, what remained as the truly distinctive feature of Jesus was not in the first place the announcement of the coming of the reign of God (which obviously also remained), but rather, that this reign of God arrived *with him* and that after him there is no one else: everything was decided in the attitude in front of him. This coincides - as is well known - with his authority over the law of Moses, with his absolute capacity to judge the men who appeared before him, with his pronouncing a definitive judgment on persons that is no longer distinguishable from the judgment of God, etc. This "implicit Christology" was also the one that later led to the reflections of John and Paul, who certainly understood the message well, because it "'always says more than an explicit Christology' (W. Marxen), and

precisely because the weight of this claim cannot be grasped by any formulation"[92] . This means that the authority (*exousia*) of Jesus was the basis for recognizing in Jesus the actual Word of God. And that authority was made present from his very actions, and not from a conscious self-recognition of it, but simply from his natural acting with authority. The issue is not primarily what Jesus says or does, but the authority with which he says or does it. In a way, it is a new version of the Old Testament *emet* (= truthfulness), that is, of the trustworthiness that Jesus offers[93] . He can be believed, as confirmed by the faith and obedience with which his disciples followed him. With this it was not difficult for the "I am Yahweh" of the Old Testament to be transformed into the "I am" of the Johannine Jesus .[94]

However, this claim of Jesus is linked to a second characteristic that accompanies it and with which it forms a unity: his poverty. In this we can perceive the tremendous paradox of Jesus: that "his absolute pretension" is united to an "equally absolute poverty", that is to say, to a total vulnerability[95] . Both - authority and poverty - appear as existential constants of Jesus and, thus, they are realized in a true unity . We have then that Jesus' pretension -which reflects his inner authority-, united to his complete poverty, are the "form" that the glory of God has acquired in his Word made flesh. It is the Word that has become non-word (silence), insofar as it is the Word that gives itself, losing itself and eliminating itself, and thus and only thus is it exalted. That the Word becomes flesh means, above all, that the Word "accepts a way of being that, as such, is foreign" to itself. Moreover, "the flesh as such does not speak," so if by flesh we mean here the human being, that flesh (= human being) will in any case imply possessing a limited way of speaking. The incarnation has meant, in short, that the Word has become silent.

> But it is precisely here that the total paradox arises. For if the *Word* (of God) has become flesh, then in this "flesh," in this finite and vain existence, there must be present, in spite of every apparent impossibility, all that is to be expressed in it. All that is to be taken out of this flesh . [96]

The paradox consists in the fact that, although the Word of God, in becoming incarnate, becomes silence; nevertheless, if it has become incarnate precisely in order to communicate, then, since becoming

man can only be realized through this mortal flesh, this flesh must necessarily become completely available for this expression. That means that in living his life-which cannot but be fully human-that same daily existence must be able to be lived as an *expression of* all that God needs to express in it. This is the origin of the *weight* of Jesus' existence. His life wants to and must be a manifestation of the Word, through the flesh, therefore, it can only be a word that is uttered within the canons of human flesh, but that says more than simply "flesh", it must be "spirit and life" (Jn 6:63). That is why its uniqueness can be understood as God's action. This also explains Jesus' way of facing life. On the one hand, he is anxious for his hour to come and be fulfilled, but at the same time, he allows God to act and to carry out his life completely. This reveals the harmonious existence of the specific weight of his life together with his total renunciation. This is what the Christian community understood as kenosis (= abasement): the incarnation was the assumption of the form of a servant (or slave), in such a way that Jesus had renounced his own former glory, which was the glory of God, in order to take on the form of a servant. In this way Jesus could lead his life in a total abandonment of himself, in obedience and poverty, where these are not the expression of a simple lack, but in the first place, they are the expression of the gift of himself to men and of having been sent by the Father.

This "prestige" or *kabod* of Jesus walks from the "weight of an absolute pretension", "through his poverty and abandonment, towards a preponderance of 'flesh' which, as such, is non-word, kenosis and silence". However, this is only possible if, from a Trinitarian background, it is revealed that the Word is pure relationality (donation) of the second person of the Trinity and, at the same time, hides its reality in not being more word in the cross and resurrection, in such a way that "there the weight of pretension becomes splendor of majesty"[97] .

3. *The cross as the definitive expression of glory.* Without ignoring what we have said, for Balthasar, the meaning of *kabod* as the weight of God is revealed in its true significance and depth in the New Testament only with the death of Jesus[98] . The theme of the sacrificial

and redemptive death of Jesus -a central argument in Balthasar- we will see in detail later[99] , so that here we will only mention it very briefly and insofar as it is necessary to understand our theme, while awaiting its more detailed explanation. Balthasar affirms:

> The fundamental structure of this same Word became visible in the triad of pretension-poverty-abandonment: for the authority (full power) that comes from God had to be made rigorously explicit in the sphere of non-power and, even more radically, in the abandonment of all existence (including death) at the disposal of that God who gives form. This was to such an extent the fundamental structure of Jesus' existence that the form of its duration depended on it: it could only be existence in reference to the hour of absolute duty, of death. By living for this hour (indeed, in dependence on it) all his moments acquire meaning .[100]

We must keep in mind that for Balthasar, a correct interpretation of the death of Jesus necessarily implies understanding "the New Testament idea of the love of God, who *out of love* takes upon himself the sins of the world; and this love *must* be twofold: love of God the Father who allows God the Son to risk himself in the absolute obedience of poverty and abandonment, where he is but a recipient of the divine 'wrath', and love of God the Son who out of love identifies himself with us sinners (Heb 2:14), fulfilling with free obedience in all this the will of the Father (Heb 10:7)"[101] . This shows the two characteristics of this culminating moment of Jesus' life: the obedience of the Son and the eminently Trinitarian character of salvation.

It is clear that the subject of kenosis is properly the pre-existent Son who assumes the condition of slave, and with this also assumes the destiny of all concrete and historically situated humanity, including being under the curse of sin. In this way, the incarnation is oriented towards the cross, but not only as the common destiny of all men, who walk towards death and where they cannot exempt themselves from suffering, but his bearing the destiny of all humanity and, from there, assuming the sin of all, is not born of his being man, nor of his human destiny, but of his personal relationship with the Father. This implies (and at the same time allows us to understand) that there was a divine decision that meant abandoning the form of God to assume the form of a slave.

> For Jesus is not only one among others who endures the common destiny, but the only one who endures the sin of the world, and his obedience does not flow simply from man's

destiny of death, but from his very personal relationship with the Father .[102]

Now, this obedience that is born of the Trinitarian character of the passion is due to the "'altruism' of the divine persons as pure relations in the life of intradivine love"[103] . As we shall see in the next chapter, creation necessarily means the existence of the *other* in God, which is what explains why - in the Logos - God was able to create an other outside of God. For us, what is important now is the fact that, in the creation, there is already a kenosis on the part of God, because, together with creating the human being, God gives him a freedom - finite but authentic- before which God has to remain in a certain latency in order for it to be such. God, in some way, detaches "something" of his own freedom so that the human being can exercise his. However, this kenosis of creation was based on an even earlier and more profound one - although historically later - which is the kenosis of the cross, that is, of his commitment of love for humanity. Indeed, at the moment of creating the human being, not only did he give him his freedom, but God himself already assumed the consequences of that freedom to the extreme, in such a way that, at the moment of the eventuality of sin, God had already assumed in the Son the redemption of the human being as a commitment of love and fidelity. Therefore, there the Son transcends and transforms his generated condition into creatural obedience, in which the whole Trinity is then implied .[104]

All this allows us to understand what glory really means, as "the weight of God's action in Jesus"[105] . In the New Testament, δόξα "does not mean many diverse things, but always one thing with diverse aspects. This one thing is unveiled in the ultimate interpretation of Jn as eternal Trinitarian love come into the world"[106] . Indeed, this element of "magnificence-greatness-glory", which is a transcendent property of the Trinity.

glory," which is a transcendental property superior to any categorical consideration of being, since it is a property of God, that is, of the foundation of all being, is "more than a concept"[107] and "only in Jesus Christ, and ultimately only in his absolute obedience even to the cross and hell, would it be revealed what the glory of God is in its (good)

truth"[108] . "Trinitarian love, which has been revealed as the New Testament truth of God's *kabod*, only exists as 'splendor' as it radiates from the weight of the obedience of the cross"[109] . Here we can discover that profound correspondence between obedience and love, which makes the glory of God a thoroughly Christological concept. Thus, the glory of God, which is revealed through the earthly existence of Jesus, is an aspect that is present in all phases and at all levels of revelation, but in order to understand it in this way, one can never lose sight of that concrete characteristic of the event of revelation in Christ: obedience and love.

Concentration of content on the concept of "glory".

John concentrates in this concept the whole salvific event, indicating that it includes many aspects that are not always designated with the same term. On the other hand, we also saw that in Judaism there were different meanings for this same concept. For all these reasons, Balthasar attempts to break down the content of what is the glory of God, starting from five aspects that, complementing one another, give an approximate account of what is understood by δόξα in the New Testament, glory that shines in the face of Christ.

1. *Glory through image.* Biblical revelation is under an unparalleled paradox: the fact that God reveals himself implies that God himself has prepared, in creation, some form of expression through which he can reveal himself; but at the same time, by revealing himself and manifesting himself in it, precisely because he is God and *Non-Aliud* (= Not-Other)[110] , he explodes whatever form of revelation he uses. "The paradox of biblical revelation consists in the fact that the inexpressible *as such* has been poured into the Word"[111] . In doing so he reveals his presence in the world, but together with this he also reveals his superiority as Lord of the world. This is the foundation of biblical glory. And with this we enunciate the first characteristic that Balthasar wants to highlight: the close relationship, in the New Testament, between image and glory. Biblically, the epiphanies of God, as acts of apparition, always revolve around concepts such as likeness, form, imprint, etc., which, at bottom, are indicating the result of the apparition itself. That is, the glory of God is manifested

as..., the Son is made like..., etc. All this indicates that Christ is the image or apparition of the invisible God, but insofar as he is the fruit of the love of the Father who sends him[112] . Thus the relationship between glory and image can be well understood:

> For the Son represents neither a technical copy, nor a physical emanation, nor a static icon of the Father, but the unlimited love of the Father "appears" in the unlimited obedience of the Son. Here the whole plane of the image is transcended, for the infinitude of God's love reflected in the cross and in hell is, seen with the eyes of earth, the absolutely invisible that makes "visible" the inconceivable divine love of the Father .[113]

This means that the image -which is the only possible way through which God can manifest himself to created beings- becomes a transparency of God's glory and, therefore, glory and image are intimately united, in the same way that human beauty is transmitted through the figure or *Gestalt*. In this way-as is proper to every form of perception-seeing the "image" also implies the rapture or rapture that produces that which has become visible, in such a way that, in our case, that contemplating in faith is not simply a looking, but is, in the first place, an action of that (that one) which is contemplated: "God himself who enlightens us, nay, who imprints his word and engraves his image on us; and only in this inversion (in which the object becomes subjective-active) does one arrive at Christian perception. *What* is perceived depends, in the last analysis, on the initiative of the object"[114] . In fact, the object contemplated determines the contemplator entirely, transforms him, assimilating him to himself. The word of God, insofar as it is light and image, has a transforming power that shows the form of absolute love, which is precisely its divine glory .[115]

2. *Glory that justifies (as grace)*. The relationship between glory and image is only one part, which must be complemented by the relationship between glory and justice or justification. In effect, "with the response to the Word, the full correspondence between God in himself and God in the world is achieved," with which creation is restored and the lordship of God shines in it, expressed in that his "right and justice are imposed"[116] . This means that God's glory, along with appearing in the world as image, likeness or form, also "is affirmed and imposes itself within the world"[117] , in such a way that

the human being is transferred to a new aeon, to the ontological sphere of justification; and in the world, along with the fulfillment of justice, the glory of God, insofar as it is love, justice and light, is manifested. For this reason, in the Old Testament the concepts of glory and justice are almost interchangeable, and the same happens in the New Testament, where one can see an affinity between the theology of John (glory) and Paul (justice). This is what is proper to faith as obedience: it is letting God act in us and transform us internally, and then living as justified - as graced by God - so that God's glory shines on our face. This justification is an indwelling of the Spirit-with his power-that makes him capable of glorifying the Father in the Son, by being a copartner in the divine filiation.

3. *Glory in concealment.* The cross of Christ, although it shows the weight of the presence of God, does not show "any divine power-splendor". We are thus faced with this tremendous abyss of "the absolutely unglorious reality of the 'form of a slave' (Phil 2:7)" in the foolishness of the cross (1 Cor 1:25). This glory is "manifested through its absolute concealment"[118] . This is a great mystery, but it represents an essential characteristic of the form of Jesus. Indeed, if in the Old Testament the coming of God's reign was expected to be linked to the return of God's glory to the people (Ezekiel), then, although "neither Jesus ever claimed a δόξα for his earthly life", "nor did his disciples ever ascribe it to him"[119] , there must have been involved in some way in Jesus' life the glory of God, which was to return. It must have been a new but present form. Indeed, and precisely because of that same intrinsic relationship between glory and kingdom, present in the eschatological horizon of Jesus,

> The experience of Jesus' greatness, in his renunciation of all display and publicity (Jn 7:4), must have seemed so central to the disciples that, once they began to interpret it from the event of the cross and resurrection, they used all the expressive material at their disposal to make this greatness felt .[120]

This was expressed biblically in "that the post-Easter community inserted features of the risen Lord in pre-Easter events and even [had] to do so" because "the Risen One is the truth of the mortal and dead Jesus, and only this truth (which integrates all of the above) has

interested and existentially interested believers"[121] . This is seen, for example, in the miracles, the parables and the transfiguration of Jesus, which show that the disciples understood very well that the glory of God was present in that humble and simple Jesus, but it was present in an extremely paradoxical way. Hence, this concealment of Jesus, this renunciation of all appearance of power, must be understood from the center of the life of Jesus, which is his Trinitarian mystery: "the greatness of Jesus is the manifestation of the free abasement (kenosis) of the glory of God in the non-freedom (obedience) of the form of a slave"[122] . The disciples understood this with such depth that even the very resurrection of Jesus was presented as an event in which, with respect to the visibility of the divine, the same reserve that was observed in the life of Jesus continues to be present, and with that they continued to refer everything to the future of the parousia.

For this reason, the New Testament has expressed the paradox of a *hidden glory* based on new theological concepts. The Synoptics speak of light (a concept also present in John and the Apocalypse). Paul emphasizes the obedience of Jesus (coinciding in this also with the Synoptics). And John sees the glory of God in the flesh of Jesus, a glory that is manifested at all times. But flesh means the human being precisely in what is not divine, in his weakness. Hence Jesus entered into the weakness of man in order to forget all human glory and seek only the glory that comes from the Father[123] . Thus, in John's most profound Christology, the "'glory' that the Son possesses before the world together with the Father (Jn 17:5)" is understood as the "reciprocal relationship of love between the Father and the Son, as it will appear in the incarnation"[124] . Glory, in John, is always conceived in a New Testament and Trinitarian sense and, thus, surpasses the Old Testament representation. Jesus is the one who remains faithful to the will of the Father and does not seek himself. Likewise, he does not reflect his own glory, but that of the Father, that is, in the relationship of the Son with the Father he makes the glory of the Father appear, which is the love that empties itself in the Son and that presents itself to the world, in the self-emptying of the Son, as self-emptying. This is why Jesus, as revealer, is the unknown, the hidden one. Thus, the

whole life of Jesus must be understood from the cross, his hour. Seen from the world it is death, seen from God it is the irradiation of the Father's love. This is the visibility of his glory as an ever greater love, but which, as an expression of greatness, is pure concealment.

4. *The Holy Spirit glorifies us.* Just as the perception of the form always implies a rapture or ecstasy, the arrival of the Word of God also implies "the coming forth from us by the power exerted on us by the call that comes to us, by the power of the divine love that comes to us and makes us capable of receiving it. This is the work of the Holy Spirit: to introduce us into "the sphere of glory between the Father and the Son as it appeared in Jesus Christ". This is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who brings forth God's life of love - of which he is the fruit - in us, "thus making us capable of 'glorifying' by our life the glory that has been given to us and has become ours"[125] . The Spirit, insofar as mutual love, is properly the glory of the Father and the Son and, therefore, is the only one who can also make that glory shine forth in the world. And that is precisely why he was sent. In other words, the Holy Spirit transfers to us the inner life of God, which until now was external to us. Indeed, the great novelty of the New Testament - according to Jeremiah (31:31-34) - is that God will write his law *in* our hearts, so that we can recognize God from within us. But that means that his law - which is ultimately the commandment of love - has been poured - as love - into us, that is, it is the Holy Spirit himself that has been poured into our hearts. That Spirit introduces us into the inner knowledge and understanding of God, and gives us his strength to fulfill his law and collaborate in that glorification of the world, in the sense that the world glorifies God with its works of justice. The Holy Spirit has been sent to make real what for us was only a future possibility and a present impossibility.

This shows, once again, the profoundly Trinitarian character of the glory of God. The great change brought about by the New Testament is the introduction of the human being into the Trinitarian relationship that embraces and assumes the creaturely relationship. Indeed, according to Eph 1:3-14, the purpose of all creation is the praise of God's glory. For everything has been conceived "in Christ"

and we have been chosen beforehand "in Christ". So this means that election is not posterior to creation, but precedes it. God's love for the creature is not a second moment after creation, but precedes it. Creation was brought about precisely because of this prior love "in Christ". Now, the distance that existed between that election "beforehand" in Christ and our sinful situation has been overcome by the event of the cross and resurrection, and by the Holy Spirit who, by being poured into us, makes us one Spirit with Christ, and allows the believer to "appropriate" the Spirit of God. This is what has also been called the birth from above (Jn 3:3-5). In this way, the one who receives the gift does not receive it as an external gift, but appropriates it as his own, as personal property; but with this, the human being - paradoxically - now becomes the property of the giver, he becomes God's own[126] . And the fact that this does not lead to an identification between the donor and the donated, but rather goes beyond an identity, can only be explained by the Trinity, where identity and difference coexist eternally. God, by sending us his Spirit, who is also the Spirit of the Son, has chosen us in the Son to be his children and co-heirs. And with that, in reality, we do not arrive in a strange place, but we return to our own home, since we have been created "in Christ". We glorify God with our love in response to his creation "in Christ".

5. *Love of neighbor as glory.* We have just affirmed that the union between the divine and the human, through the work of the Holy Spirit, is what enables human beings to produce fruits of love, which becomes a clear expression of the glory of God. Indeed, the Holy Spirit has been poured into our hearts (Rom 5:5), thanks to the self-expropriation of the Father and the kenosis of the Son to the point of death on the cross, that is, love of neighbor is an expression and a fruit of the primordial love of God. So, whoever appropriates the Holy Spirit, not only receives the gift of God, but understands that the essence of the glory of God is the self-expropriation of God, since the Father has expropriated himself in the Son and both in the Holy Spirit who, in turn, donates himself to us. Therefore, bearing fruits of love is an authentic glorification of God, in the sense that it shows the

immense love of God that has been poured into our hearts. This is why love of neighbor can be defined as glory, because all the love that is perceived in the world has to be redirected to its primary source, which is the love of the Father. Thus, fraternal love has its measure in God and, for this reason, it will always be the authentic expression of the glory of God; just as the death of Christ on the cross was the true manifestation of the love and glory of God. Fraternal love authentically shows the glory of God's love, its greatness, majesty and ineffable reality as intradivine love .[127]

Some critical points

The publication of the first part of the *Trilogy,* called *Gloria. A Theological Aesthetics,* caused a transversal recognition of Balthasar, among other things, for what the recovery of transcendental beauty meant for theology, and for the relationship established between this transcendental beauty and the biblical idea of the "glory of God". However, some aspects - of this theme that concerns us here - have also aroused some perplexity and even criticism. Three of them seem to me to be important. The first is the (inadequacy) of understanding the concepts of beauty and glory as equivalent[128] . Second, Balthasar's rejection of some aspects of the biblical historical-critical method[129] . And, finally, a certain undervaluation of the Hebrew Bible, as such[130] . We cannot discuss here, with the amplitude it deserves, about each of these three issues, so we simply raise them. However, their response has already been fundamentally hinted at and offered throughout this chapter. And it must be recognized that indeed some approaches present problems (and dangers), but it seems to me that Balthasar also knows how to deal with (and take care of) them, as we shall see below.

With respect to the relationship between beauty and glory, it is possible to read Balthasar by interpreting him from a rigorous equivalence between the Greek idea -grosso *modo*- of beauty and the biblical Hebrew concept of glory (*kabod*). And this would obviously imply two important problems. On the one hand, because the concepts do not come from a similar semantic context, nor do they mean

exactly the same thing. The Greek understanding is centered more on the idea of proportion; on the other hand, the biblical glory is more centered on the idea of majesty or clarity. And, on the other hand, because an equalization between glory and beauty would incorporate a human measure in God, since it would imply a certain proportionality that could go against his divine simplicity and his absolute being as God. However, it seems to me that even though these dangers may lurk in a reading and interpretation of Balthasar's work, strictly speaking they cannot be attributed to the literal tenor of the text or to Balthasar's thought, as can be seen from a careful study of the seven volumes of *Gloria*. Balthasar knows how to distinguish between beauty -as a transcendental of created being- and the glory of God -as a theological transcendental-; as he also knows how to distinguish between created being and the foundation of all being. In fact, at the beginning of the volumes on the *Glory* in the OT and NT, after finishing the volumes of the journey through *the space of metaphysics, he* programmatically affirms that these two new volumes cannot be a simple continuation of the two previous ones, because the revelation of God is not the last step of creation and history, but a free irruption of his sovereignty[131] . And throughout his work, when he speaks of the "glory of God," he properly refers to the "divinity" of God, which is not the same as created beauty[132] . But precisely for this reason, Balthasar finds it very useful to have recourse to the transcendentals of being, and in particular to beauty - as clarity and not only as proportionality - as an "analogous" created element, which allows the glory of God - as majesty, as divinity and, finally, as love - to express itself through the limitation of being and its transcendental beauty. This is precisely why the glory of God can appear in the hiddenness and "non-beauty" of the cross.

In addition, Balthasar, throughout the two volumes of *In the Space of Metaphysics*, confirms historically what he had already said in the first volume, that is, that there are various ways of understanding beauty, among which is the Greek form of "proportion," taken up by modernity; but there is also a whole tradition of beauty as transcendental of being, which is understood as "clarity" that, along

with being an expression of something, also conceals that something, and therefore, in that expression, refers to something that is beyond it: that is what allows God to manifest his glory through created beauty.

Finally, it is true that Balthasar, in general on this subject, bases himself more on literature than on other expressions of art, which is indeed a limitation. However, this should warn us that when he speaks of glory he is not thinking primarily of a concept of the visual arts, in which this critique would make more sense. Balthasar uses, above all, a metaphysical and, in this sense, theological concept. In this way, the difference between a concept of beauty of the pictorial field and the concept of the biblical glory of God is reaffirmed. And what is interesting and important for Balthasar in this whole subject is that, on the basis of the *analogia entis,* he is able to find an authentic *relationship* (not equivalence) between both concepts, which gives him a new theological understanding of the revelation of God.

2. It is clear that Balthasar is critical of many aspects of the biblical historical-critical method. This could present a problem for our topic, since it is based on a very personal biblical exegesis. And he has been criticized for this. But Balthasar does not offer a closed critique of the method as such, nor of its use in a kind of anti-scientism. It is not the historical-critical method *per se* that deserves Balthasar's criticism, but its use in two senses, for him, that can be criticized. First, when the use of the method dissects the parts and is unable to see the totality. For Balthasar this is exactly the opposite of his own method of looking at each part from the totality and finding the totality in each part. What he has called with the concept of *Gestalt.* A dissection of parts, a meticulous study of the genesis of texts - with all the usefulness that this has - can never grasp the "truth" of the Word of God at its core, precisely because each part can only be understood from the totality that opens up its center. He made this clear in volume I of *Gloria.* And it is precisely from here that he deduces his second criticism : the claim of the historical-critical method to understand the text starting from its genetic-historical context, because the authentic understanding of the text demands much more than that. Two more things should be said about both criticisms. On the one hand, by

underlining the limitation of the exposed method, Balthasar is completely in line with the most current exegesis, which has opened its range of possibilities to many other methods, which complement, criticize and make the historical-critical method an indispensable tool, but one more among many other possible and necessary ones. In this sense, his criticism of the absolutization of the historical-critical method is today completely shared. But on the other hand, Balthasar, with his philological training, makes ample use of this method and takes full advantage of it in his own approach. In this way we can see, for example, the extensive use of all the exegetical results of his time to understand Christology, which has allowed him to arrive at a very good synthesis regarding how Jesus could have authentically lived a human life, being the Word made flesh[133] . In spite of the immense difficulties he has to face, he attempts a synthesis between the traditional faith of the Church and contemporary exegesis, thus resorting to the historical-critical method, but also recognizing its limitations and submitting it to criticism. In doing so, he recovers all the value of St. John's Gospel for a contemporary Christology .[134]

3. Finally, his understanding of the Bible as a whole, and in that sense the direction of the Old Testament towards the New and, in particular, towards Christ as the manifestation of the glory of God; being a traditional Christian way of understanding Scripture, it also presents a critical point: the value of the Hebrew Bible in itself. This is a broader theme which, of course, does not apply only to Balthasar, but which is equally worthy of reflection, because effectively by centering everything on Jesus, in whom the entire Old Testament culminates, a question is placed on the value of the Hebrew Bible as an authentic and complete unity, and in the end, it can be questioned as a valid word of God. This being true, in chapter IV, *Foundations for a Christological Theology of History,* we will return to this theme, where Balthasar also grants the revelation of the people of Israel a theological value in itself, albeit a partial one. There we will be able to qualify this criticism, although it will remain an open topic. We refer to that chapter.

II. Trinity and the existence of the "other" in God

Balthasar possesses a structurally Trinitarian thought. If "the absolute being of God" "can only exist as Trinitarian"[135] , then all *Theo-logy* must be permeated with Trinitarian reality. Indeed,

> God the Father, the "source of divinity" ([DH] 490, 525, 568), reveals himself to us only in two divine hypostases: the Son, who manifests to us the will of the Father, and the Spirit, who infuses us with his love. And in this salvific revelation he reveals to us something of the mystery of his immanent Trinity . [136]

Hence the Trinitarian doctrine is the center and foundation of all of Balthasar's theology[137] , but not only because it is the nucleus of Christian theology but, in a special way, because based on the work of Adrienne von Speyr[138] -among other sources-, he has also developed a very elaborate Trinitarian doctrine. He reflects deeply, not only on the Trinity as the nucleus of revelation, but also as the foundation of the existence of everything created, and he also highlights the Trinitarian reflections embodied in everything that exists. It is a theology that truly takes seriously its Trinitarian foundation, that is, where the Trinitarian is not only a final or introductory chapter, but authentically the basic structure that orients all its theological elaboration. This can be confirmed at the end of this work. Hence the importance of this chapter. This means that the Trinitarian theme permeates the whole *Trilogy* - because for Balthasar it is also the basis of every other aspect of Christian revelation in a very explicit way[139] - and, therefore, it is not so easy to make a synthesis of such a rich thought, with so many edges and so all-encompassing, since "in all three parts [of the *Trilogy*] we speak of the Trinity of God"[140] .

For a better understanding of Balthasar's Trinitarian theology, it is necessary to keep in mind three major axes - which are discovered throughout his reflection - and which represent three successive steps in his reasoning. (1) Starting from the revelation of the Trinity in the economy, Balthasar deduces whatever it is possible to think about the immanent Trinity (which is perhaps his [and Adrienne von Speyr's]),

even going to the "limit" of what is thinkable[141] . (2) He then reflects on the tension that exists between what can be said of God and the absolutely transcendent of his being as God (resorting to analogous and metaphorical forms of language, but at the same time, to the corrective of negative theology). (3) Finally, he shows the innumerable traces of the Trinity present in creation and in the salvific economy, and draws the consequences of this for human life and for the Trinity itself (another of its most characteristic aspects).

We will proceed here by dividing the chapter into two parts: first, we will present a synthesis of Balthasar's theological reflection on the Trinity (in order to get an idea of his contributions), and then we will offer an exposition and reflection on Balthasar's approach to the Trinitarian reality and the conditions of possibility and limits of such theology .[142]

Theological reflection on the Trinity from the standpoint of revelation.

Economic Trinity and immanent Trinity: basic principle

All reflection on the Trinity is based on a basic theological principle, nowadays commonly accepted: what we know of God, and in particular his Trinitarian being, is known only because he has revealed himself as such. Since we have known and confessed the coming of the Son, and then recognized and believed in the sending of the Spirit of God, we know then that together with God also dwells his Son - and therefore God is Father - and the Spirit; without ceasing for that reason to be ineffably one God. Obviously this is an unfathomable mystery, but if we believe that the Son is the one sent by God and we believe in what he has revealed to us, then we must believe that God is a Trinity of persons. Balthasar states this clearly:

> Thanks to Jesus' reference on the one hand to the Father and on the other to the Spirit, we see the reality of what in its explicit formulation will be called the Trinity of God. The Father, whom Jesus shows, is his origin, but distinct from him; in the same way the Spirit, who, returning to the Father, will send from him, is also distinct from him. Now, the distinction of various subjects in God is only possible from the Christian point of view on the basis of the behavior of Jesus Christ. Only in him has the Trinity been opened up and made accessible to us. In this way, the principle employed in this book [*Theodramatics* III],

according to which the theological characters cannot be defined independently of their dramatic action, is definitively confirmed, which is decisive. Of the Father, the Son and the Spirit as divine "persons" we only know thanks to the figure and behavior of Jesus Christ. The principle, frequently employed today, according to which we cannot come to know the immanent Trinity and risk affirmations about it except through the economic Trinity, must therefore be approved .[143]

Balthasar has affirmed that the guiding theological principle of his *Theodramatics* is that "only action will reveal who each one is" of the characters in the drama, "who *he was*" and "who *he will be* who is acting, experiencing encounters and making decisions". *"Agere sequitur esse* [= acting follows being] demands at the same time an *esse sequitur agere* [= being is the consequence of acting]" "Only in the unfolding of his history with men does the unveiling of the 'heart of God' take place, which is what truly reveals to us *who* he is"[144] . Hence the need to contemplate the complete unfolding of the drama, up to its final outcome - resurrection and parousia - in order to know who God truly is (and who the human being is in his deepest truth). This theodramatic principle is another way of expressing that the immanent Trinity is known from the economic Trinity. But Balthasar tries to carry this axiom to its ultimate consequences, as we will see in this chapter.

Jesus in his economy. If we then look at the economy of salvation, we recognize that in the Synoptics and in the Acts of the Apostles, the novelty of Jesus (and his claim) to announce the reign of God - which comes with him - and to address God as his Father and with whom he maintains a unique relationship, is clearly revealed. Moreover, he is led by the Spirit that fills him and manifests him, a Spirit that is of the Father but that, after the resurrection, Jesus himself gives to the world. John expresses this in a more theologically elaborate language, from which Balthasar will also develop his own Trinitarian understanding[145] . For John, the Son *explains* the Father since he is his glory and his truth, but at the same time, in that explanation he shows that he himself is the Only Begotten because he is full of that same glory and truth. With his life of self-giving and witness, Christ then manifests the goodness, love and grace of the Father - since he is his explanation - and with that he manifests that God - in whom he

coincides being and acting - is precisely love. But also, the Father, in giving truth and grace - or, in other words, the grace or gift of truth - what he is revealing is both his own Son - as that truth in his entire existence until the cross - and also the same "relationship between Father and Son in the explaining Holy Spirit, who transmits" interiorly the grace of truth as the anointing of the same Spirit poured into hearts, where he realizes communion with the Father and the Son[146] . This is why "Balthasar places particular emphasis on the cross as revealing the Trinity"[147] . And all those who receive this Spirit can understand the Son as the explanation of the Father. And if this Spirit is both the one "sent" from the Father (Jn 15:26) and the one "commanded" by the Son, then it is the "gift of both"[148] . This clearly manifests the Trinitarian being of God, evident in the cross, as an expression of the Son's love for the Father, of his being sent by him, and as a gift of the Spirit to participate in this same relationship .[149]

The eternal is in time. This correlation between economic manifestation and immanent reality is based on the fact that "God the Father created the world not 'outwardly' but thinking of the Son within the divine life," so it follows "that, when the Son, becoming man, approaches the world in a definitive way, he, entering into time, does not abandon eternal life"[150] . And therefore, his whole human form of life, and in particular his obedience up to the cross, "is not only the instrument, but also the content of his eternal behavior before the Father"[151] . But with this we can think that Jesus, with his attitude, not only shows us the Father and is the adequate expression of the Father, but also that the eternity present in his quality of eternal Son has become present *in time* and thus "in him the truly eternal life has penetrated worldly temporality"[152] . This is certainly an unfathomable mystery. But at least one thing is clear: this worldly temporality of the Son does not develop "outside" eternity, but in some very mysterious way, it must also develop in it, since the Son remains eternally God. Everything eternal that develops in the temporal is, in some way, rather "meta-temporal", and therefore truer; but as far as our theme is concerned, this indicates why, starting from the temporal, one can know what happens in the eternal: because this

temporal is a reflection of the eternal that is present there itself.

Immanent "prior" Trinity. What has just been said is a basic principle for Balthasar and he will make the most of it, in a way that is quite his own. But it assumes in a very radical way that the immanent Trinity is truly *prior* to the economic Trinity, that is, that God is Trinity in himself and not only *because he* reveals himself "as" Trinity. Rather, it must be the other way around: God reveals himself as Trinity because he *is* so from all eternity, before the creation of the world and his self-manifestation to the creature. This is a basic and unshakable postulate for Balthasar, in which he differs from the position of Rahner , who made famous the axiom "the 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity, and vice versa"[153] , where he also stresses that "the two aspects 'cannot be adequately distinguished'". For Balthasar, on the other hand, in the phrase "conversely," "God runs the risk of being absorbed into the process of the world and of not being able to come to himself except through that process"[154] . And this is very delicate because it implies an important consequence in the understanding of the immanent Trinity, in the sense that it could only be understood as love on its economic level, but one could not speak with propriety of that same thing on its immanent level[155] . And precisely Balthasar's whole concern and effort is to show that God is *immanent* love*, that* is, eternal, for which he must be *eternally* Trinity. This means that in God there must be a divine and eternal "other" - prior to any project of creation - so that within God - albeit in a completely transcendent and non-numerical way - there is an "I" and a "you" that can love each other mutually. Only in this way can God be understood as love in the essential sense and not only from the point of view of creation and his love for the world. This we must now explain in greater detail. He deals with it in a special way in *Theology* II .[156]

What can be discovered and reflected on about the immanent Trinity

Metaphysical foundation. From what we read in the Gospels about the attitude and relationship of Jesus with the Father and the Holy Spirit, Balthasar deduces the processions, the persons and the essential

reality of God as love. And that is his essential point: to be able to adequately justify that God is precisely *love* before the creation of the world, that is, eternally. To do so, he must move - and he does so in a quite characteristic and distinctive way - from divine missions *ad extra* (biblical) to divine relations/persons *ad intra* (dogmatic). But this has presupposed the acceptance of a fundamental Christological affirmation, discussed and defined already at the Council of Ephesus (431): "Jesus' relationship with the Father [and with the Holy Spirit] is by no means only the manifestation and self-expression of his pure humanity, but (through humanity) of his person, which is inseparable from it and through it becomes present"[157] . The subject of these actions is the Son of God (through his human condition) and, therefore, in that Jesus who "addresses the Father by calling him as you", "this you is certainly first of all a human sound, which, however, must be an expression of an eternal relationship in God himself". This is possible because the human being, as the created image of God, is, for that very reason, open to God and, therefore, "God can radically take hold of this openness in order, when he wishes, to manifest himself immediately through a human being"[158] . The human being is *capax Dei* (= fit to contain God) and God can manifest his glory through and *in* humanity. The same can be applied to the relationship of Jesus with the Holy Spirit, where one perceives a profound unity (because the Spirit has anointed Jesus) and, at the same time, a difference (because the Spirit leads him). This unity and difference between the two - which is perceived and acted out in his earthly life - refers once again to the Trinity.

The processions. Assuming this anthropological-christological-biblical fact, Balthasar must induce what it means that God is then called "Father" by someone who is his "Son". This is an immense mystery. But it would have to be said - always starting from the economic Trinity - that, from all eternity "he [= God] is pronounced in the Son, and only thus is he Father. But at the same time he is God, for what he pronounces (and what will proceed from both: the Spirit) is God." This is why the Father has always been recognized as "the source and origin of all divinity" (DH 490, 525, 568)[159] . This means that what is

proper and characteristic of the Father is to have generated the Son, that is, what distinguishes him as Father is the generation of the Son. That is, therefore, his personal characteristic. But, in addition, since his person is identified with the whole divine nature, he can beget another hypostasis that is also divine, because he generates it insofar as he is God, that is, from his substance. However, he does so precisely because he is and exists as Father. What properly defines him is his being *Father,* because being Father is the way in which the divine nature subsists in him. With this, although we began from the economic Trinity, the reflection has advanced beyond it, although always sustained in what is economically realized. All in all, here we can see that to speak of the Trinity can only be done on the basis of opposing propositions, which complement each other but cannot be synthesized into a unity: "he gives up his divinity" and "he continues to be God". The solution is found in that God possesses his divinity in the mode of surrender: and that is called "Father". And so each person ineffably shares the same substance. This then is what makes it possible to understand hypostases as *subsistent relations.* In the relationship is found the unrepeatable of each person and in the subsistent his identity with the (simple) divine essence. That is why they can be three distinct persons, but share a unique substance. In any case, this is a tremendous mystery, where the fundamental nucleus of what each of the persons are and what defines them as such, will always be the name they have received in Scripture: Father, Son and Holy Spirit[160] . That is what is most proper to each one. And with that we have now returned to economics. Everything else has been an attempt at understanding, subject to the ever greater dissimilarity of the transcendent God.

God is love. From this Balthasar now derives the reason why God is love[161] . We have said that "what the Father bestows on the Son by begetting him is the perfect and indivisible divinity that he possesses"[162] ; but if he is eternally Father, he is so because he has eternally generated the Son and, therefore, eternally given him his divinity, which he then eternally possesses as a *gift.* Mysteriously it can be said that the Father, in giving his divinity, loses nothing (DH

805), but at the same time, he gives everything. In any case, the essential point here is that divinity exists *as* given, as freely given. The Father, then, remains Father in eternity after giving all of himself to the Son, which is also true for the procession of the Holy Spirit. Hence Balthasar's conclusion: "And if the giving of oneself from the Father to the Son and from both to the Spirit does not correspond to an arbitrariness or to a necessity, but to the innermost essence of God, this innermost essence - however the processions are distinguished from one another - can ultimately only be love". From all this we can deduce that the divine essence is not only coextensive with the three persons, but that it is "co-determined by the always unique participation in it of the Father, the Son and the Spirit; in other words, it never existed otherwise than paternally, filially and spiritually"[163] and, therefore, it has never existed except as generously and detachedly *given*. Thus, the deepest mystery of God is born precisely from this reality of the Father, which distinguishes him as such: he is a person who, from the beginning, expropriates himself in the Son and, with the Son, gives himself to the Holy Spirit. This is why God is love immanently in the Trinity, before there was any creation.

Turning our gaze to Jesus, the Son, and in the light of what we have just said, we can perceive that the existence of Jesus "is a proof of the free and yet absolute love of the Father"[164] , who reveals his eternal and "without motive" essential love in the generation of that Son. Since generation comes from an unfathomable without motive of love, this love is the primordial background of the divine mystery. And then, from this reciprocity of love between the Father and the Son-also equally inconceivable-is born, through its fecundity, the Holy Spirit, who is the objective fruit of that love, which is identical with the essence of God. And since love is not blind, but always has an objective, this shows us that the objective of all God's action is love, which therefore also moves all his actions. The purpose of everything God does is love. Love is the purpose of everything in God and, therefore, also of everything created, whose reality is the image of God. This is what expresses creation and the whole "drama" of human revelation and salvation. Therefore, all the actions of the Father, the

Son and the Holy Spirit must be understood in the light of love. But this love, shared by all three, is carried out by each one in his own particular hypostatic way. Love, like all the divine properties enclosed in it, manifests itself economically in the diversity of forms it acquires in each of the divine hypostases: as sending, as giving, as gift, as judgment, etc.

God, then, is the divine persons. A final consequence of this - which we have just hinted at - is that Balthasar, following the biblical model and (later) that of the Greek Fathers, centers his Trinitarian doctrine on the persons and not on the one essence:

> God is unique in three hypostases that represent the fullness of his essence and each of which possesses all that irreplaceable fullness according to its own way. Thus, the attempt to describe in the light of revelation the properties corresponding to God and identical to his essence will be in no way realizable if we dispense with the way in which each hypostasis, not only possesses this essence, but determines it. But where could we find access to an approximate description of these divine attributes always co-determined by the hypostases, if not starting from the revealed economic Trinity? [165]

But this implies that, in God, the use of the concept "person" for each of the three divine persons is unique and diverse in each one, with respect to the other divine persons. Therefore they are not under any common and univocal concept of person, as if they were under a common "species" (even if only for the divine persons) in which they are numerically distinguished. Each "person" is so in an absolutely unique way and has nothing in common - in terms of his being a person - with respect to the other divine persons, precisely because that (the way he is his personal being) is what distinguishes him from the others and what defines each of the persons of the Trinity. What is common and totally equal is their substance, which is the same. And, furthermore, the use of the number "three" in the Trinity has nothing quantitatively countable, since it denotes a fullness that corresponds to the unique transcendence of God with a dissimilarity always greater than any created concept (in the Trinity, as an ab-solute reality, nothing is quantifiable).

With all that has been said, we can conclude that "the Trinity of God is not a penultimate reality, behind which would hide an unfathomable 'essence,' inaccessible to every creature"[166] . Rather, the

Father, in sending the Son and the Spirit, has given himself to us and has given us everything, and has reserved nothing for himself. God is Trinity and cannot be understood except as Trinity. In other words, the economic Trinity reveals how God is in himself, that is, immanently: he is Trinity eternally and not because of creation or as a necessity to reach a greater fullness.

The Logos between the Father and the Spirit

The Word as expression. Having synthetically expounded the Trinitarian reality of God as a condition of possibility for his constitution as love, Balthasar also reflects at length on what the generation of the Son means in itself, that is, what it means to be the "Word" of God. The reflection always begins economically and from there proceeds to an immanent reflection on what this can mean within the Trinity. For him, the basic point is that Jesus always defines himself "with reference to the Father, from whom he proceeds, and to the Spirit, with whom he collaborates and to whom he entrusts his explanation, and with respect to whom, therefore, he essentially is"[167] . This is precisely what is meant by the concepts with which Scripture and the Church refer to him: logos, word, sense, image, expression, testimony, expositor. All these concepts refer to relationships that refer back to both the Father and the Holy Spirit. This supposes that his "from where" and "to where" also belong profoundly to him and that he is in the other two as the other two are in him. Now, "the fountain of divinity, which can generate the 'Word,' the 'Sense' in its immeasurable fullness" is "a 'Father' who, even though he is invisible in himself, can be truly represented in the 'mirror' and in the 'figure' of his Son." And we have seen that the motive is love alone. "But the motive is at the same time the content of what is communicated: what in the Logos is visible of the Father is, once again, love in all its divine dimensions and, therefore, also with all the consequences that follow therefrom for a possible free creation"[168] . This means that the Son is not only an expression, but also, at the same time, must repeat that gratuitous movement, that loving and unreasoning self-expression of the Father. This implies that the Son possesses, in addition to the origin of the Father, the goal to which he

is directed: the loving generation -in gratuitous love- of that which we have known as the Holy Spirit.

Expression of love in two directions. This "turning to" can be understood and described - intradivocally - in two complementary directions. The first, as a continuation of the generative direction of the Father (who engenders him), which he must copy by going out of himself in a total outpouring of himself as absolute love. And the other direction is in the opposite direction, towards the Father, who is absolute love as a generative source and to whom the Logos responds with the same love received and with absolute gratitude. In this way, the Logos "represents the entire Trinitarian love in the form of expression"[169] in both directions. And this is verified economically, since the sending of the Son is, in reality, the worldly continuation of his intradivine procession. In fact, Jesus culminates his mission on the cross, from where he pours out the Holy Spirit into the world -first sense: he pours out love- and, after his resurrection, he entrusts his work to the same Holy Spirit who, for his part, does not carry out a work of his own, but continues the same mission of the Son, explaining it and making it present, until the parousia. In other words, the presence and time of the Spirit are at the same time the presence and time of the Risen One, whose purpose is to return the world to the Father -second sense: the return of the Son to the Father, together with all that is created in the Son-.

Said now from Johannine concepts. The truth of the Son is the Father, of whom he is the expression. But this truth - begotten and expressed - is born of the profound and gratuitous love of the Father, the source of all love and truth, in such a way that truth also rests in love. And since this truth cannot be understood as closed in itself, because it is based on the Father who gives himself totally, then this truth transcends itself in the Holy Spirit, the love of God. In this way - economically - the Holy Spirit can be defined as a "gift" at all, a gift that is given to hearts and that is concretized in the transformation of all who receive it into a likeness of the incarnate and glorified Word himself. From here we learn that the Spirit, who arises *principiter* (= originally) from the Father, also permeates the entire event of the

origin of the Son, an event through which the Son becomes the image and place of the consistency of all creation. Therefore, the Spirit also animates and energizes everything created so that it may achieve its full liberation in Christ. Therefore, the Logos is the archetype of creation and the Holy Spirit is the one who brings about the liberation, the definitive consummation and the final transformation of everything created[170] . Both act inseparably: the Son, as image, recreates everything according to his own reality, and the Spirit, as gift of freedom, brings everything to its full consummation and perfection.

Because it is "expression" it can be incarnated. Finally, Balthasar also examines the different denominations that correspond to the Logos in its relation to the incarnation, that is, in its capacity to translate divine logic into human logic. Here we find some things that still help to better outline the contours of the divine person of the Word.

> Previously we can affirm what is known: that for Thomas the central attribute of the second person is *"Verbum",* and this insofar as the inner Word *(verbum mentis),* in which the Father who is known is expressed; and that, for Bonaventure, on the contrary, the attribute that summarizes is "Expression" *(expressio),* in which the meaning of the other names is synthesized . [171]

It seems to Balthasar that Bonaventure, with the idea of "expression," highlights something that is very important. First, "the fact that the procession of the Son that expresses the Father is also an action of paternal love"; then, "the fact that the Son places himself 'at the disposal' (*dispositive*) of the Father in every way, for which reason he must be valid as *'mundus archetypus'* [= clean archetype] of everything that can be created by God". And he emphasizes, moreover, that the Son is the unique expression of a unique and unrepeatable One, because he expresses him in every sense. An *"expressione in absoluto"* (= absolute and complete expression) can only be unique and unrepeatable; and since the "expressor" is a person, he must therefore be able to perfectly express his essence and his personality, and thus be the archetype of everything to be created. Indeed, all that the Father can think is always identified with the Son. Here the possibility is prepared for the Logos to become the world. Thus, only the Logos is "incarnable" and it is so only in the human being, because he is *the*

image of God .[172]

The Holy Spirit as a person and his own particularity

Pneumatology will be treated more extensively in a later chapter, especially in all that refers to the action of the Holy Spirit in persons and the world[173] . Here, however, it is important to mention an aspect that corresponds directly to our theme: his condition of "person", proper to his Trinitarian being. The theme appears in *Theology* III, a volume that is completely dedicated to the *Spirit of truth, a* title that we should understand as "the Spirit of Christ (or of the Father)". There Balthasar devotes some 60 pages to a historical review of the theological elaboration of the personal reality of the Spirit, to then make a synthesis on the theme "who is the Spirit"[174] Let us briefly recall here the central aspects presented.

Difficulties for an elaboration. In the first place, Balthasar presents the reasons why the theology of the first centuries -and of all times- has had difficulties in elaborating a pneumatology. This is because (a) the Spirit has manifested itself in multiple ways and (b) because its action in many respects has coincided with the action of Christ[175] . Both of these things have made it difficult to elaborate a clear profile of his most proper action and to determine his exact place and distinction from the Father and the Son. In other words, he is a person difficult to "apprehend". However, starting from these same difficulties, two elements of the economic action of the Spirit were decisive in deducing the personal characteristics of the Spirit. (1) If the Spirit was the one who introduced the understanding and the reality of the Son -who is God-, then, by introducing and explaining the *divine* reality (of the Son) (Jn 14:26; 16:13), he must necessarily be divine as well. (2) If in the Old Testament the Spirit was a form of presence and action of the power of God, and in the New Testament it is discovered that the Son, who reveals himself, is not the Spirit of the OT, because he is distinguished from him (although he is intimately united to him in economic action); then the Spirit, in some way belongs to the one whom Jesus now calls his Father[176] . Considering these aspects, let us now review the theological path of pneumatology.

In the New Testament there is a wide field in which the Spirit "appears

as a quasi-personal force of God", with which the Son is also endowed[177] , and which was the Old Testament prophetic Spirit that had spoken in view of Christ. But, on the other hand, God is the subject of this force, which is not identical with either the Father or the Son, but which is not impersonal either. Moreover, the Spirit appears as a divine reality that is between the Father and the Son, where there is a certain unity and at the same time distinction between this Son, endowed with the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit himself. Likewise, the Holy Spirit does not seem to have a concrete face (hence he assumes figures such as dove or fire) but "radiates on the one who has a face the glory of God, which we reflect and in which we can be transformed"[178] . And that face, which is that of Jesus, becomes the explanation of God and, therefore, the Spirit, together with the Son, is also an explainer of God. He is the one who introduces and explains the Son, who has been given to the Church and to individuals and has thus brought to completion the work that Jesus began. Now, from all this economic data of Scripture, theology tried to advance towards a reflection on the immanent reality of the Spirit and slowly moved forward in this search for the intellection of the reality of the Spirit.

The Fathers of the Church, after affirming the divinity of the Son, also affirmed the divinity of the Spirit (Nicaea [325] and Constantinople [381]), but showed great "perplexity when it came to saying anything about the 'person' of the Spirit"[179] . It was easy to speak of the effects of the Spirit's action in the Church and in the world - and to see acting behind them all a single Spirit - but it was very difficult to define exactly its "hypostasis", that is, its mode of subsistence, and what its *provenance* means (as opposed to the "understandable" that is a "generation"). What is the difference between the procession of the Son and that of the Spirit, since the latter is not generation? That had no answer. In any case, what was clear was that the *tropos tes hyparxeos* (= mode of subsistence) was not a generic mode of being, valid in the same way for all the divine persons, but for each one it had to be completely unique. Moreover, as we have already said, the plurality in the Trinity is not numerically expressible, nor even if we

speak of "three" persons can we introduce with the number a polytheistic idea of God; although, on the other hand, something of that numerical must be accepted - transcendentally - when speaking of an order *or cabs* in the Trinity. The solution of the Fathers was to speak of what Thomas would later call "transcendental number"[180] . So, in the midst of all these complexities, in order to characterize what is proper to the Spirit, recourse was had to three complementary principles that gave shape to the pneumatology of those centuries. (1) The "founding and evident" principle, from which everything starts, is the baptismal confession and the ecclesial liturgy: "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). (2) We must start "from the effects of the Spirit attested in Scripture" and from there deduce its "hypostatic peculiarity"[181] . (3) "The divine hypostases act in the world in common, but each according to its own personal peculiarity"[182] .

The Middle Ages, beginning with the concept of person/hypostasis, which at Nicaea (325) was applied in a Trinitarian context and at Chalcedon (451) in a Christological context, attempted a concept of person valid "in general". But the problem is that the "common grammatical designation" of person does not express *anything* about "the ontological modality" proper to each divine person[183] . Therefore, although since the formulation of the Creed the personal condition of the Holy Spirit no longer presented any problem, it was still difficult to know in what way this concept applied to the Holy Spirit. Hence, in spite of the fortune of Boethius' definition, which focused on substance, with Richard of St. Victor we begin to speak of *ex-sistence* to define what corresponds to each of the persons, in such a way "that the divine persons can only be designated by means of their determined relation of origin," that is, "the divine person is essentially described by its 'from' and not by its 'to'"[184] . In other words, person does not designate what is common to each, which is only the essence, but what is proper to each, which is the relation. This is the way forward. Thus, starting from the theological concepts already acquired in patristic times in this regard, that is, that the procession of the Spirit is *ab utroque* (= from both) and that his personal essence is to

be love and gift; and furthermore, from the relationship between knowing and loving, where love helps to know and therefore is superior to knowledge; then it follows that "the Father and the Son cause to proceed, in an act-we strictly common to both, the Holy Spirit as that intradivine 'you' to which they refer in a common and simultaneous way" (Mühlen)[185] . The Holy Spirit is thus simultaneously both the love between the Father and the Son and the visible fruit and witness of that love.

In the Modern Age the most important contributions have come from some new understandings of personalism, where the *interpersonal relationship* was elevated and incorporated to the very definition of person. "A singular person without a you is unthinkable and contradictory in itself"[186] , so that relationship "is a primordial form of the real of the same rank as substance" (Ratzinger)[187] . "Man is, from the beginning of the Bible, responsible for his you". "Ontology and personality would meet in reciprocal dependence." "Just as God cannot be dissolved in pure relationships, so neither can interhuman relativity dispense with the being-in-itself of the person"[188] . Here relation has received all its ontological quality, in such a way that it becomes an indispensable and essential part of the ontology of a person. And in the person the relation is what defines the person as such. Thus the conclusion is reached that being a person is "the supreme form of being"[189] . In this way, the personal self -as being- recognizes itself as open to all being, and knows that it is placed in existence by an infinite Thou, who has given it a mission -which is its vocation- and this is identified with its person. With all this, Balthasar can now give his own answer to the question of who the Spirit is.

Spirit as mutual love. According to Balthasar -as we have just mentioned-, in order to refer to the Trinity it is always necessary to join two opposing propositions, as the only way to understand something about a mystery that is ineffable in itself. Thus, for example, when we say that the Father gives all that he is (his divinity), but with this gift he loses nothing of himself[190] ; in this "contradiction" it is clearly manifested that the Father can be this relationship of donation only because he exists as giving himself

(together with the Son who is always "giving back" everything to him), where the relationship coincides with the essence (his essence is to be always giving himself, and that of the Son is to be always receiving himself), since this is the only way in which he can possess everything and, at the same time, give everything to himself.

> Thus, it only remains to understand the paternal self-giving as an act of love prior to everything (*unvordenklicher*)[191] , which the Son as such receives; and not "passively", as beloved, but, since he receives the *sustantia* of the Father as his love, simultaneously as co-lover, as the one who loves in his turn, the one who responds to the whole of paternal love, the one who is ready for everything in love .[192]

This means that the Father, in transmitting to the Son his own essence or divinity, which is precisely the active donation -the always giving of himself-; the Son receives -as his own essence- not only the being donated or received, but also receives as his personal essence/ divinity that same active donation, since the donated essence that he receives is the essence/divinity of the Father, which is permanent donation.

> From this results (as Adrienne von Speyr explains)[193] the reciprocity of mutual admiration and adoration, infinite mutual gratitude (from the Father, because the Son allows himself to be eternally begotten; from the Son, because the Father gives himself eternally); from mutual supplication (from the Father, that the Son may want to fulfill all his desires; of the Son, that the Father allow him to fulfill also his most extreme desires); a reciprocity of absolute love, which apparently should be eternally sufficient, but whose internal character is of such exuberance, that "suddenly" - one could say - and precisely *as* exuberance it causes something to proceed that is once again One: the proof that the loving reciprocity has succeeded, just as the human child is both the proof of the mutual love of the parents and the fruit of that love. "The third," says Tertullian , "is the fruit of the root of the fruit tree" (*Ad. Prax.*, 8). It comes out of reciprocity as the incomprehensible, intangible to itself and yet, in a perfect way, the liberated: the Spirit . [194]

In this beautiful text - based on one of the most important works of Adrienne von Speyr - the nucleus and the proper of the Spirit is clearly expressed, as the *exuberance* of the love of the Father and the Son. This is expressed here in a metaphorical way with the dialogue that is hinted at there (of "begging" each other to let the other give himself, to love him, etc.) between the Father and the Son, which means nothing other than that their essence is to love each other, and love is understood here as the complete and absolute detachment from oneself. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the "quintessence (subjective) of

the reciprocal love of Father and Son, of which he appears as the bond (*nexus*), and as the fruit (objective) born of this love and which bears witness to it"[195] . In other words, the Holy Spirit is strictly that same mutual love, which is "personalized", "objectified", and which "comes forth" from them as gift and fruit, because theirs is the opposite of a selfish and self-enclosed love. Thus it can be understood that in the Father's self-donation (or generation of the Son by the Father) this absolute love is already present; but that it can only "take place in the *communio* of love" between the Father and the Son or, what is the same, in the paternal love that the Son responds filially. For love is only between two (or more) in mutual reciprocity. That is why it can also be said that the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, but not in the sense that the Son is a mere passive instrument, because the Son participates in this procession with his own love and his loving response to the Father, who gives him all that he is.

> There is nothing to object to the procession of the Spirit *"principaliter"* from the Father (Augustine) or *"immediate"* from the Father and *"mediate"* from the Son (Thomas), as long as the Father is not conceived as pure "cause" *(aitia)* of Son and Spirit. This would have as a consequence that the origin of the Spirit would not be the love between Father and Son, and God as love would in reality only arise in the Holy Spirit .[196]

Spirit as a mutual gift. It is clear then that the Holy Spirit, if it is "objectified" love, must proceed from a relationship of love and this implies the participation of the Father and the Son. All this without subtracting anything from the Father as the source and origin of the whole Trinity. Now, if the Spirit springs from the reciprocal love of the Father and the Son, it is for that very reason a "relationship". But since every relationship must also have an end, that is, in a relationship there must be *someone* who relates to *another*, then the Spirit cannot be only the reciprocity (that is, relationship) between the Father and the Son (although it is also essentially that). The Spirit must also be, in addition, "the gift substantiated beyond mutual giving, *donum* par antonomasia"[197] , that is, it must also be the term of a relationship that makes it subsistent, that is, the objective and subsistent fruit of the relationship Father and Son, God as gift and love. With this we can conclude that the Spirit, as gift, evidently already exists before his historical action. He does not become gift

through the salvific economy, but reveals himself as gift in the economy because immanently he is the divine gift par antonomasia:

> Rather, it is already intratrinitally the essential gift, that is, love, identical in each person and yet realized within this identity in a way that is always distinct *(tropos tes hyparxeos),* always incomparable, always personal. In this way, the "most extreme apex" of the divine essence is identical to its "innermost center," and if the Spirit is given to the creature as a gift, in that gift is the whole essence of divinity, and therefore the "divinization" of the creature . [198]

By this is meant that, although it is manifest that the Holy Spirit is the gift of God, nevertheless, it is not so exclusive that the Father and the Son cannot also be defined as gift. Indeed, since the Father's self-giving is also gift, and the Son likewise expresses and reveals that gift of the Father (and in that sense is likewise gift), then, if we are referring to the Holy Spirit as the "essential gift," that means that he is the "gift of the gift" (*donum doni*). And, in this sense, although all God is love and all God is gift, this love and this gift are "hypostasized" - as a divine person - in the Holy Spirit who is thus *the* gift and love par excellence, fruits of the relationship of love and self-giving of the Father and the Son who, for their part, are also love and gift. For this very reason, the love of God has been poured into hearts and into the world through the Spirit, as the gift and love of God (Rom 5:5). Thus, the Spirit is clearly manifested, "from the intra-Trinitarian level, as the given explainer of the divine gift (which the Father gives us with the Son)", but "because the gift of the Son was already in itself a revelation of love, this explanation through the Spirit can only be realized in its turn as an introduction to love"[199] . That is to say, they are two joint and complementary actions: the Son reveals love and the Spirit introduces into it, brings it to fullness, makes this love possible in each one. In other words, his explanation of love is precisely to make us experience and live that love that we already understand; and in truth, that is the only possible true understanding of love. All this that we are exposing is tremendously mysterious and, in using human language, we must know that everything that is said must always be corrected with the basic principle of Lateran IV -always repeated by Balthasar-: in everything that is said about God there is always much greater dissimilarity than similarity. All in all, from the economy we

can know something of this most mysterious reality that is the Holy Spirit.

The common work of the Son and the Spirit

The next step is now to reflect - economically - on the joint work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit and - immanently - on the intra-Trinitarian relationship between Son and Spirit. He does so on the basis of a famous statement by Irenaeus :

> As if he [the Father] did not have his own hands! Indeed, he is always assisted by the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, through whom and in whom he freely and willingly made all things. It is also to them that he speaks when he says (Gen 1:26): "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"[200] .

The Son and the Spirit, as *hands* of the Father, just as in creation - according to this suggestive image of Irenaeus - they shaped the human being, so also, sent by the Father to reveal Himself, they always act together, carrying forward the Trinitarian redemptive work. It is not possible to think of the mission of one independently of the mission of the other. They are inseparable, though also unmistakable. Balthasar explores this theme from four perspectives that illustrate well the common work of the Son and the Spirit in the economy of salvation. The first three are biblical-theological reflections on the joint work of the Son and the Spirit, and the fourth is their consequence for the understanding -intratrinitarily- of the procession of the Spirit of the Father "and" of the Son, which is known as the *Filioque* [= and of the Son] .[201]

1. *Biblically*. Balthasar takes up the traditional data. In the Old Testament, although the "word" of God is not confused with the "spirit" of God, they are nevertheless almost interchangeable, since only by inspiration of the *spirit* can the *word* of Yahweh be transmitted. In the New Testament, the incarnation of the Son was the work of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35) and the Spirit anointed, led and accompanied Jesus throughout his life (Lk 4) so that, acting always with the power of that Spirit, Jesus would fulfill his mission (Acts 10:38). And, although "we have no idea of Jesus' awareness of this inseparable connection with the Spirit," in "the fact that the Spirit rests *upon* him, his knowledge of the Spirit's presence *in* him cannot be

questioned"[202] . The Spirit shows him the will of the Father and he allows himself to be guided by him. In this sense, the Spirit acts *in* Jesus and *on* Jesus: he fills him and leads him. On the other hand, "it is worth noting that, among all the economic situations, there is no case in which there is an I-Thou relationship between the Son and the Spirit. For the Son, only the Father is a you; and this you is a you in the Spirit"[203] . This is very important for understanding the true mystery of the Trinity and how proper and unique each of the hypostases is, since it is indicating that the place of the Spirit in the Trinity is not to be a mere "third", but to subsist as a *between* the Father and the Son, as their *nexus* and their *fruit,* as we have already explained. Thus we can understand both his origin from both, as well as his own hypostatic form. Finally, when Jesus dies he gives up the Spirit, as a testamentary disposition (Jn 19:30). This means that the Spirit - in the Son - acquired a kind of earthly/human experience in order to replicate it later in all humanity. Thus, sent subsequently to the Church, the unity of the two is manifested once again, since the Spirit brings about in the Church - through his own presence and the charisms he pours out - the transfiguration of the Church into the Body of Christ. But the Spirit never substitutes for the Son, but only extends his mission universally and acts together with him.

2. *Speculatively*. Here Balthasar makes a reflection very characteristic of him, with which he illustrates well the joint action of the Son and the Spirit, and where the economic and immanent situation of the Trinity are profoundly related. He calls it "the Trinitarian inversion"[204] . The incarnation is evidently a Trinitarian work, where each divine person acts according to his own mode of subsistence, although only the Son becomes properly man (he alone becomes incarnate). Thus, the Father sends the Son and entrusts to the Holy Spirit the work of the incarnation in the womb of the Virgin. This implies that the Son assumes a voluntary "letting the Spirit do", which means not only letting him *carry out* the incarnation, but also letting him *lead* him in his life of obedience, manifesting to him at all times the will of the Father. But this supposes a "Trinitarian inversion," that is, that during the time of the Son's abasement as an earthly and pre-Easter man, it is

not the Son who is sending the Spirit, but the Spirit who is leading the Son. Here, along with observing the simultaneous action of the Son and the Spirit, we also see that the economic relationship between them changes according to the needs of the economy itself. But there are always the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit acting together, although each according to his own way of being, his *tropos tes hyparxeos*. All this is possible because the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the* Son, and, therefore, can both "incarnate" the Son (because he proceeds from the Father) and "be sent" by the Son (because he proceeds from the Father through the Son), according to the economic moment in which he finds himself[205] . In other words, the salvific economy and the abasement of the Son imply an economic "inversion" of the "normal" Trinitarian order (that the Spirit proceeds third in the Trinity) so that the Son can carry out his mission as man, led by the Father through the Spirit. With all this, for our theme, it is clear that the action of the Son and the Spirit is always joint.

3. *Works in common.* Balthasar also explains theologically how the work in common is and then exemplifies it in some concrete soteriological actions:

> The two hands of the Father do not work each on their own, side by side, nor do they act one after the other (as if the Spirit came only when the work of Christ was finished), but in a very differentiated way, one with the other and within the other, since the Spirit always remains Christ's own Spirit. This is why the formula we initially used for Trinitarian theology (the Son reveals the Father, the Spirit reveals the Son) needs a more exact description. The Father manifests himself in the Son, who points to the Father, and in this reciprocal pointing to each other, which God reveals as love, points to the Spirit of both. Of course, by pointing to the reciprocal Father-Son relationship, it shows at the same time the essence of the Persons . [206]

This means that the Holy Spirit, by revealing and "explaining" the sending of the Son into the world - by his own action - and, in turn, by showing and making present the resurrection of the Son who returns to the Father, reveals with this the love of the Father and his glory, as well as the divinity of the Son and his love for the Father and, with all this, in short, reveals the depth of the reciprocal love between the Father and the Son. Here we see that the work of the Spirit, which is one of revelation and salvation, is completely united to the work of

the Son and the Father. This can be seen, for example, by looking at the work of divinization that the Spirit accomplishes in human beings. Balthasar recalls, once again, that it was Irenaeus who initiated the theology of divinization. For the Lugdunese, "the Spirit predisposes man for the Son of God, the Son leads him to the Father, and the Father gives him incorruptibility for eternal life; the [eternal life] that comes to each one as a consequence of seeing God" (*Ad. haer.* IV,20,5)[207] . Here a basic theological principle is clearly expressed: the presupposition for divinization-which is the work of the Holy Spirit-is precisely the incarnation of the Son, which gives us access to the Father. The Greek Fathers elaborated and deepened this line of thought with their theology of exchange, namely, that "the Word of God became what we are so that we might become what he is"[208] . Here again we see the unity of God's work: the incarnation is the bridge between us and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who must be God in order to effectively divinize us. So here we observe exactly the economic relationship between Son and Spirit: the human being is divinized by the action of the Spirit who makes him like the Son, that is, gives him divine filiation; and this divine filiation, which the Son possesses by nature, we can acquire because this Son has also become true man; and, therefore, we, in him, being human, can also become divine, that is, sons of the Father and like the Father. Thus, the work of divinization is the work of the Father, the Son and the Spirit .[209]

This unity is also verified in the relationship between the concrete and particular that is Jesus of Nazareth and the universal character of his mission. Indeed, although Jesus claimed a universal value for his mission, since it was eschatological, that is, definitive and for all; and this was possible because the reign of God came with him, and also the power of the Holy Spirit was at work in him[210] (both things of universal value); nevertheless, his task had to be carried out within the limits of a human, normal, historical and mortal life. So, in order for this concrete and singular life to have a universal value, two things had to happen: (1) his life (and his death) had to be *pro-existent* in the sense that it carried in itself the universal insofar as reconciliation with all humanity; and (2) the universalization proper to the Passover,

that is, his resurrection -which begins the new aeon- and the sending of the Holy Spirit to all flesh (Acts 2:17-20). Thus the task of the Holy Spirit consisted in making the Risen One and his saving work present everywhere and at all times, to the point of leading everyone to the complete truth. Therefore, with the resurrection begins the time of the "explanation" of the truth - Christ - but in which Jesus Christ is not a passive actor, but makes himself present through the Spirit, whose task is to keep the treasures of Christ always open. Christ lets the Spirit act, but the Spirit makes Christ corporeal-glorious present and incorporates us into him, making us *the Body of Christ*[211] . The two hands of God work together until the last day.

4. *The Filioque.* Finally, Balthasar devotes several pages to a reflection on the *Filioque,* which he defends as fully valid and adequate[212] . But he is interested in explaining its meaning and showing that the introduction of the *Filioque* is in harmony with the Greek position, since it helps to better understand the joint economic work of the Son and the Spirit, which must always have its foundation in the immanent reality. The theme is well known and we will not delve into its meaning, nor into its philological and historical origins -which Balthasar summarizes-, but we will only briefly present his position on the subject . [213]

Historically, what is relevant is the following. In the first centuries there was a long relationship "of peaceful coexistence of two different theologumena on the common dogma of the Trinity"[214] . Both accepted each other. And although the Western bishops did not participate in Constantinople (381), when Chalcedon (451) - with the participation of Greeks and Latins - recognized that council as ecumenical - together with the creed professed there - Augustine's theology of the *ab utroque* [= of both] (of the Spirit who proceeds "from both") had already been developed and was known and accepted in the West, and the *Filioque* had already been proclaimed by Pope Leo the Great. So that "the recognition of the definition of 381 by the Latins could not take place in any other way than in conformity with their understanding, which at that time was not contradicted by the Greeks"[215] . On the other hand, both have reproached each other

with the same thing: (1) that the other side introduces economic views into the immanent Trinity; and (2) a different understanding of the concept "proceed." With respect to the former, it must be repeated that no access to the immanent Trinity is possible that does not start from its economic self-manifestation; therefore, mutual reproaches should have no place here. And with regard to philology, the Latin *procedere* [= to proceed] designates any kind of proceeding, while the Greek *ekporeusis* [= procession] "only designates proceeding from an originating cause (*aitia*), in which the Son, 'caused' in his turn (*aitiaton*) could have no part"[216] . But current exegesis notes that in Jn 15:26 (from which the use of this term originally comes) "it is not at all a question of the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father, but of an absolutely economic one; anything else would be 'outside the Johannine perspective' (Schnackenburg)"[217] . That is to say, the dispute regarding the concept used and its meaning (which also varies according to the language used) cannot be what is relevant, because it is framed in the economic reality that cannot be transferred without transcendental correction to immanence. With all these elements, Balthasar now attempts a vision of synthesis and seeks a solution to the issue, which both accepts the *Filioque* and is also in conformity with the Greek perspective.

Systematically, the following must be said. If one looks at the Greek world in general, one sees two traditional conceptions about the Trinitarian theme: the bi-unity of the two hands, inseparable in the mission; and that of Nicea, which speaks of the "unity of essence between the Son and the Father", but "there is no mention there of the Spirit". This demanded "as a necessary complement the relationship between Father and Spirit, which is established by the Constantinopolitan by the declaration *'simul adoratur'* [= receives the same adoration]". Thus was assured "the *homoousios* [= consubstantial] of the Spirit" Holy[218] . But in speaking of the divine equality of the Spirit it does not seem that they meant to refer specifically or particularly to the relationship of origin, as attested by Athanasius and Basil. From all the above results a double affirmation: "the Spirit proceeds from the Father (because the Spirit is God), and

this somehow 'through' (*dia*) the Son, who is already there, because otherwise the Father could not be called Father". Thus "from the Greek perspective, this leaves open the question of how this *dia*" of 'through the Son' is to be interpreted, but strictly speaking it cannot be denied. It can mean that "it proceeds from the Father, inasmuch as this is precisely Father", or "that the Spirit 'receives' something from the Son", or that "in this receiving of the Spirit, the Son is really co-active" producer[219] . If we now look at things according to the economy, the Holy Spirit is upon Jesus, but also in Jesus. Therefore, it must be recognized that, at the beginning, with this formula "proceeds from the Father", it was simply intended to represent the Trinitarian cabs, with which the idea of only the Father as cause is well understood. But this did not question the contribution of the Son. Moreover, in the West the priority of the Father has always been accepted: *a Patre principaliter* [= of the Father as principle]. In conclusion, a model that reduces the Son to mere passivity and where two distinct hypostases proceed from the Father without any mutual relationship makes it very difficult to call God "love," because the reciprocity necessary for love to exist would not exist. The same would have to be said if, in the West, the fact that the Father and the Sons are a "single principle" were to be extreme, because, in that case, by eliminating the mutual relative position of the persons, the Spirit would have to arise - as "love" - from the common nature and not from the mutual relationship between persons, which also affects God's being love. Therefore, for an adequate intellection of the subject, two fundamental truths must always be kept in mind: (1) "The previously demonstrated impossibility of applying univocally the concept 'person' to the divine hypostases". And (2) one must presuppose, at least, a transcendental plurality, so that God can be called love, *caritas*[220] . With this reflection, Balthasar confirms, at the level of the origin of the Spirit, the intrinsic unity of the work of Son and Spirit in the self-manifestation of the Father.

How and what is it possible to say about the Trinitarian God from the created reality?

Karl Rahner's criticism regarding Balthasar's Trinitarian theology is well known. He affirms that his theology is "gnostic"[221] because it makes an inadequate leap (*Absprung*) between the economic reality and the unapprehensibility (*Unverfügbarkeit*) of God, in order to speak of the Trinity starting from the paschal mystery[222] . This is a very severe criticism, which Balthasar also answers firmly: "this judgment seems unacceptable, as would be clearly shown by taking into consideration the concluding chapter of this book [*Theodramatics* V], which deals once again with the immutability of God in the whole economy of salvation"[223] . It cannot be our aim here to discuss Rahner's motives and arguments for making such a (strong) critique - which, incidentally, were words in the context of a question, at the end of a theological conversation[224] - but it is important to take seriously the issues involved in it. These are: (1) The seriousness and consequence with which the axiom of the identity between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity is assumed and, therefore, the possibilities that exist to advance in an intellection and formulate a *human word* about the immanent Trinity from the economic Trinity. (2) What language is possible and valid to speak about God. This is especially important in Balthasar, since he recognizes that he takes his reflection to the limit of what can be said from the created (where, since everything created is an image of God, everything good that exists must have a correlate in God), but he also knows that he is using a metaphorical language and images that are also based on the work of Adrienne von Speyr . (3) The fact - which must never be forgotten - that all positive theology must always possess the corrective of a negative Christian theology, where, in all that is said about God - according to Lateran IV - dissimilarity is far greater than similarity. These three are theological principles to which Balthasar refers at length throughout his work, and with them he justifies precisely his Trinitarian development. Therefore, I do not think it is fair to say that his theology is "gnostic", nor that of Adrienne von Speyr (which must also be understood according to her own hermeneutical criteria). In the following, we will expose three great criteria that accompany Balthasar's Trinitarian development (which

are his own way of facing the three principles just mentioned) and that allow us to interpret his words correctly: an adequate *Christian* negative theology; an adequate use of *created* language to speak of the Trinity; and a certain *inversion* of the order between Archetype and image to speak of the Trinity.

Negative Christian theology

Negative or apophatic theology [= that which denies] (in its transliteration from the Greek), a concept that Dionysius the Areopagite introduced into Christianity, refers to that way of accessing knowledge of God that consists in the *negation* of all concepts, as an appropriate element to express what God is, since his transcendence is of such magnitude that everything we can say about him, in reality, does not correspond to what he essentially is. Of God we know what he is *not*, but we cannot know what he is. His greatness is of such magnitude that we have no concepts, no ideas, no images adequate to his reality, even if we apply them eminently. Hence, the authentic way to "know" God is precisely to "deny" him all resemblance to the realities known to us. Negative theology is - in this sense - the opposite way to the use of concepts, images and symbols to refer to God. Now, this "apophatic" way of representing God has a long tradition, both in the Bible and in the most ancient Greek philosophy, and is born of the awareness of the inadequacy of our language to speak of God and, at the same time, serves as a "corrective" for any analogy that attempts to describe the divine. This theme also permeates all of Balthasar's theology, whether with the permanent affirmation of the "greatest dissimilarity" or with the understanding of God as the "Totally Other"[225] and "Not-Other". And, in *Theologica* II, he makes this theme explicit in order to prevent some reproaches regarding the analogies that can be formulated between the Trinitarian God and the intramundane creature[226] . But he does not propose a classical negative theology, a philosophical theology - neoplatonic type -, or valid in any religion - as could be the Buddhist type -, but he expressly wants to show what are the characteristics of a negative theology of *biblical* character, to which he obviously ascribes himself. We can see this in four steps.

1. *Biblical negative theology*. The fundamental axiom for Balthasar is that biblical negative theology is sustained by a prior absolute *affirmation* of God and of his creation and revelation in the Logos: "Only by his unique and unmistakable actions-interpreted by his words-can he bear witness and proof of himself: as the incomparable, the one." "The God who cannot deny himself in his uniqueness denies with himself every rival", that is, every idol. "This is the primordial negative theology of the biblical God"[227] . This means - according to the Old Testament - that, although no one can see God "and remain alive" (Ex 33:20), God can consent to be seen, although he will always be seen only if he first - with sovereign freedom - wants to manifest himself and reveal himself. Precisely for this reason, John tells us that "no one has ever seen God: it is the only-begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, who has made him known" (Jn 1:18). With this we can understand the importance and true meaning of a negative theology in Christianity: it makes explicit and makes it clear that the human being is, by nature, a seeker of God, since he constantly longs for his foundation and his meaning. This implies (1) "that he continues to be a seeker even when he does not reach the definitive finding", because being a seeker is part of his human structure; (2) "that his search has an objective foundation", which is the radical relationship he has with God, as his foundation (because he has been created in Christ, according to Col 1 and Eph 1); and (3) the fact "that all that exists in the worldly environment cannot be what is sought, since it is finite and transitory, and therefore must be denied as such"[228] . As can be appreciated, this negative theology differs substantially from that other conception (e.g, Buddhist) where "that which is beyond all conceptually apprehensible finite entities [...], insofar as it is the authentic, can no longer be defined as being, but only as 'nothing'", as opposed to being, where "this nothing that is 'found' as the authentic by the seeker, must, for its part, unmask the inauthentic", that is, "the finite and outdated world", and must be denounced with all its subjects as nothingness, the illusory[229] . These are two very different conceptions of negative theology. This is very important for understanding Balthasar's Trinitarian theology.

Negative theology as a search for God. According to the above, the deepest meaning of biblical negative theology is the impulse to *"seek God"* who has wanted to reveal himself. This has two particularities: (1) unlike the non-biblical search - where the foundation did not have a personal character - in the biblical search that foundation - which is recognized as personal - presents itself "out of the blue," with all the force of a spiritual freedom, as the only God who interpellates the human being and demands his obedience; and (2) this human being, whom God has found and called, has not for that reason lost his quality as a *seeker* of God, but rather, this search has been transformed into a new kind of search - more intense and personal - called covenant[230] . From this we can deduce the biblical formula of negative theology:

> In the original affirmation there is beforehand the awareness that what is sought is "beyond" (*via eminentiae* [= way of preeminence]), and therefore the work of negation of all that is finite, definable, non-divine *(via negativa)* is undertaken only to tend without being disconcerted towards what is sought .[231]

That is to say, biblical negative theology basically maintains the fundamental principle of all apophatic theology, which is to *deny* the created in order to find the transcendent. But there is an important difference in the biblical type, since there it does not simply deny everything created, because, in fact, God has revealed himself through the created. Rather, it denies only that which impedes access to God in the created - and insofar as it impedes it - and it also denies any absolutization of the created, which also impedes this access. On the other hand, the search for God - which in fact defines the essence of all negative theology - in biblical negative theology exists and is always maintained within the covenant previously made by God, in such a way that there the negation is made, in particular, of everything that can relativize this covenant. Precisely for this reason, once these particularities - which are born of the biblical theology of *creation* in Christ - were affirmed, the Fathers of the Church had no problem, nor did they see insurmountable difficulties in appropriating, and even radicalizing, the negative philosophical theology proper to their pagan milieu. Although they did not always escape its dangers, their spirit was completely different from that of pagan philosophy,

because it had a different origin, since the Fathers "always start from the original affirmation that sustains all negation and from its equally original eminence that goes beyond all negations"[232] . That is to say, they started from the primordial affirmation that God wanted to make himself known to human beings through his creation in Christ and his Logos made flesh.

3. *Development of a Christian negative theology*. The Church adequately received this *biblical* apophatic theology and was thus able to go even deeper than pagan apophatic theology. This was because it started from the idea of *creation* - and not emanation - which allowed it to penetrate more deeply into the fundamental gulf between God and the creature - based on the freedom of the Creator[233] - because creation is definitely the non-God, something that could not be said of a world "emanated" from God, whether by necessity or by the fall. On the basis of this conviction, one could now calmly affirm that the human being is the image of God and "that God has imprinted his seal on the deepest essence of man," according to the model of Jesus Christ, which "prevents the original position of God in man from being affected by any subsequent negation. This implies that there exists "in the essence of man a transcendence that is the most original of all, a self-surpassing towards the infinite, since the image being refers by itself to an unattainable model"[234] . And this made it possible to combine perfectly the biblical knowledge and that Greek apophatic theology, starting from the certainty that we have been created in the image of God and have been found by that God of revelation; in such a way that in front of this and from there, it makes full sense and any negative Christian theology is very well understood. In it, three fundamental affirmations were reached: (1) Although it was clear that it was not possible to explicitly affirm any characteristic of God - because if we understood him, that is not God (St. Augustine) -, as it is not possible to give a "knowledge" about something without "something" of its essence being known to us; then, the supreme knowledge of God is simply to know that we cannot know him, because his essence infinitely surpasses us. (2) The truth of intramundane reality, and with which everything that exists and its

deepest meaning can be authentically pondered, is found and ultimately accessible only in God. (3) Revelation will always have primacy, and in it every movement in search of God is affirmed .[235]

4. *Difference and similarity between Christian and non-Christian negative theology.* Finally, Balthasar makes explicit the difference that exists in this point between Neoplatonism and Christianity. Christianity made good and fruitful use of Neoplatonism, but it also had to be attentive to its dangers. Here the neuralgic point is the valuation of the *other* which, in Christianity, from eternity takes place in the Son, as the "other" of the Father, unlike the Plotinian One who eliminates all difference in himself.

> Starting from the most fundamental, from the axiom formulated by Bonaventure and Thomas , that the other (derived, worldly) with respect to God presupposes in God an Other (original, Trinitarian), an Other that as such is extremely positive, it can be immediately deduced that whoever values the other of the world as purely negative with respect to God, understood as pure unity, will take a radically different path from the Christian .[236]

Indeed, in Plotinus, the absolute One had the characteristics of negativity (it is the non-sensible, non-material, non-conceptual), which basically meant the rejection of the material, the sensible and even the conceptual. Thus, the One rested fundamentally on a non-word. In principle, that is fine. The problem is that in order to access this One, a progressive abstraction of the material, of the sensible, of the corporeal and, in the end, also of the conceptual was necessary; which was directly opposed to the essential *incarnational* tendency of Christianity. The great challenge of Christianity was then to be able to unite this incarnational tendency with that extra-biblical stripping ascent. The solution was found in "the displacement of the dimension of silence to the interior of the word itself"[237] . Indeed, it is known that silence - as negativity - also belongs to being and to the word - and protects them. It is the permanent basis of the word[238] . Without silence there is no word either, because the word, along with saying also silences, along with revealing also conceals[239] . Therefore, he who truly possesses the word of God must also be able to perceive its silence, its transcendence, its negativity.

Here we have arrived at what is proper to the Christian God (and to Christian apophatic theology): the priority of the Word, which does

not annul his "silence," but rather empowers it. This means that God's silence "presupposes the divine superword, the self-communication of God, who, in giving us his Son, has reserved nothing for himself" but, in Christ, has given us an outpouring of his love[240] . He has first revealed himself, and therefore he can speak to us with his silence. This is the decisive point. Consequently, returning to Plotinus, while it is unacceptable to affirm that "if the absolute is the One, which does not tolerate plurality of any kind, nor, therefore, any kind of being in the manner of the mundane [...] then it is not attainable or at least susceptible of contact in any other way than through the radical elimination of that which claims a finite being"[241] . However, Christianity was able to take up this same mystical language and even appropriated it with the use of the concept of "annihilation" or "becoming nothing," but to signify the assimilation of the creature to the kenosis of the Son-the Other of God-who thereby represented the love of the Father. Indeed, as we have said above, the Son is the complete receptivity of the Father, he is the complete and permanent emptying of himself so that the Father generates him eternally, that is, permanently; in such a way that the human being -created in his image and incorporated in him-, with his emptying of "everything", allows the Father, in Christ, as a *created* "other" of God, to re-generate him again and again. The emptying of oneself - by the action of the Holy Spirit - so that Christ - and thus the Father - can enter, then, simply means making room for God in us. It is the supreme acceptance of God's love which is given in the Son and with which, moreover, every person tries to respond to him. We, as created others, can exist as God's *other* only in the incarnate Son, God's only Other.

> Here "negative theology" finally becomes the place of the perfect encounter, not in dialogical equivalence, but in the transformation of the whole creature into an *"ecce ancilla"* [= behold the slave] before the mystery, which brings it to fullness, of the incomprehensible love of the God who dispossesses himself .[242]

We have thus achieved a true transformation of what apophatic theology means -which does not suppress it, but rather surpasses it-, assuming it in a new and ineffable way. This is a very important first element in understanding the use of creatural -human- language to refer to the Trinity. However, it is now necessary to go deeper into the

conditions of possibility and limits of the use of language to speak of the Trinity.

Appropriate use of the language created to speak of the Trinity

If everything begins with God's desire to manifest himself to his creation-made in his image-and he has indeed accomplished this through his Word, who has become flesh to reveal the Father to us, then creation, and most particularly the man Jesus, can authentically reveal something about the Trinity of God. For if they reflect something of God and God is Trinitarian, their reflection must be in some way Trinitarian.

> A theology in which the logic of God adopts the concrete form of a created logic can only be Trinitarian. [Truth is the Logos made man [...] The man Jesus is truth as an expression of the Father and is explained as such truth by the Spirit. But since this man Jesus is at the same time the expression of the whole God (the Father and the Spirit are in him), the very human logic with which he expresses God cannot be anything other than an "image and likeness" of the Trinitarian God. Man could not be at all this "image and likeness" of God if God had only wanted to represent in him his unique "essence" excluding the Trinitarian vitality of this essence. The identity of the divine hypostases with the essence of God makes such a hypothesis impossible . Therefore, there must be in the realm of the world a representability of the Trinitarian with which the Logos that is explained[243] can and must be connected in its self-expression.

In this way, Balthasar proposes two ways through which we can recognize a "word" about the Trinity from creation: some "attempts of human thought to discover, from itself, something of the Trinitarian in the being of the world"[244] ; and Jesus "as the exegete of the Father"[245] . This supposes both that traces, images, that is, "words" about the Trinity can be found in creation, and also that the Word, in becoming incarnate, can indeed use the human to express his own word as Son, and thus also the Trinitarian reality of God.

Trinitarian images in the finite being. Needless to say, what can be "discovered" about the Trinity from creation cannot be prior to its own revelation, but is a consequence of the acceptance of its manifestation. Once God is known as a Trinitarian, the human being tries to understand this God a little better, starting from his reflection in creation. It is a question here of finding some "human structures of

being for the illumination of the divine structures presupposed in faith"[246] which, although always insufficient, are images or paradigms that, from what is created, can say something about the Creator. At various points in his work, Balthasar recalls some images that are already classics in the history of theology, and proposes other reflections that are more personal. The most important of these are the well-known images - complementary - of Augustine and Richard of St. Victor; and the philosophical paths taken by the dialogicians (and dialecticians) - who glimpse the presence of the "I-Thou" in God - and the Balthasarian reflections on fecundity, the transcendentals and the presence of the created "other," which are his most personal contributions. With these different examples we can better recognize the capacities and also the frontiers of human language.

Consciousness and relationship. Augustine with his *mens* [= consciousness], *notitia* [= knowledge], *amor* [= *love*], which he then deepens into "*memoria* (background of the spirit), *intellectus* (self-knowledge), *voluntas* (loving self-affirmation)", sought the image of the Trinity within the singular person. But since "the three powers of the soul are not the soul itself, while in God the persons are identical with the substance"[247] , then the human person is only a rather weak copy of the Trinity. That is why a complement was sought, starting from a counter-image. This was found in interpersonal love - developed by Richard of St. Victor - because in love one always looks at the other. But the important thing about this love is that it becomes a common love only when a third party is loved unanimously by both. And then we discover an image of the Trinity. However, this new reflection does not possess the substantial unity that must always exist. Therefore, this image also found itself in need of a counter-image. Naturally, Richard of St. Victor and all those who use the latter model (for example, Bonaventure) did not see in this image of God "three persons in the modern sense, that is, three centers of consciousness". For them, what is important is that here "*caritas* [= love] demands in God the 'other', the beloved, and the 'third', the beloved in common, without prejudice to the unity of the divine essence"[248] . However, this image, although balanced with that of

Augustine, always remains incapable of clarifying more than allusively the fullness of Trinitarian love within its unity. Consequently, the images of Augustine and Richard clarify "that the *imago Trinitatis* [= image of the Trinity] in the creature can only reflect" the archetype, so to speak, in reverse: with Augustine, in man the image of the Trinity is a singular person, while in God there are three, the One being still as indivisible as is the human spirit. And at the same time, with Richard, the image of the Trinity in God is "a plurality of persons in the unity of one substance," while "in man, a plurality of substances in the unity of the person." Thus human and divine nature are seen "from their opposition (*ex opposito*): each responds to the other with an inverted symmetry (*per contrarium*)"[249] .

The I-Thou dialogue. Dialectical philosophies and, above all, the dialogists (F. Rosenzweig, M. Buber, B. Casper, F. Ebner) have discovered in God the foundation of every relationship between me and you, and have thus opened themselves to understanding the "other" in God. We have said that "'the other' is in God pure position and positivity, and in no way the negation of the one or of that which envelops it". The non-equal of God and of the world, "which is the other of God", is born of the equality in the difference of the Father with the Son, who "is not *the* other of God", but, like the Spirit, "*the* other in God". However, the dialectical and the dialogical stance differ in how they approach this mystery. The dialectic "attempts to convert the whole world from the bottom up into an *imago Trinitatis,* so as to approach the original image little by little and progressively in order to attain it," "but making the 'other' each time the negation of the one, in order then to reunite both in a higher synthesis." The dialogic, on the other hand, tries "to determine the worldly copies from the positivity of the others in God (the Son and the Spirit) as from their model"[250] . In the dialogic the other is positive, because it is based on the "love that is realized in its very self-dispossession". Thus the worldly images of the Trinitarian model are "possible intramundane approximations to the eternal model of the absolute event of love"[251] . On the other hand, both philosophies-dialectics and dialogics-are *theological* because by deriving the model from a worldly *imago*

Trinitatis, and at the same time surpassing it, they discover in the model in some way God himself. In the dialogics the absolute "is always that which ultimately makes possible and guarantees the reciprocity of the I-thou." This philosophy, starting from the I-thou as a radical phenomenon, recognizes "the I as the always questioned and the thou as the questioner," and establishes "language as the happening of being and, after making such happening possible, stumble upon a *Logos Theou* [= Word of God], be it conceivable or inconceivable"[252] . This philosophy, although not religious, leaves us at the door of religion and points "to a theological one in which God, in his self-explanation by grace within the interhuman, is the truth, as the ultimate foundation of the true that happens between me and you"[253] .

Fruitfulness in the son. Despite the usefulness of the images mentioned above, Balthasar still investigates three other human structures that can open up for him renewed possibilities for understanding the Trinity of God. One of them, which is very important for Balthasar - and which he will elaborate in various senses throughout his work-, is the very normal and common experience of parents who, before the "surprising" appearance of the child -who shows him/herself to be a true spiritual and autonomous person- experience something like an incomprehensible and gratifying miracle. It is the surprising experience of being in front of a life - spirit - that has emerged from themselves. Here, too, a significant image of the Trinity can be found, which is why Balthasar is surprised that no one has worked it out much - in this sense - at the philosophical level. That the baby - with its unbidden and, at the beginning, unconscious existence - collaborates in the relationship and fruitfulness of the I-Thou encounter of its parents, which is more than a simple natural process, is one of the most eloquent *imagines Trinitatis* grafted onto the creature. It is a perennial demonstration in favor of the triadic structure of concrete logic, as already discovered by the dialogists. Fecundity is a law of organic and spiritual life. Every spiritual I-thou relationship is fulfilled only in an objective third party, in a generation of the beautiful, in the production of a fruit, as occurs in a

transcendental and ineffable way in the Trinity .[254]

The transcendentals. The second structure that Balthasar investigates in order to recognize vestiges of the Trinity is the constitution of being based on the transcendentals. If every being possesses the transcendentals as fundamental properties - one, true, good - and if, according to Bonaventure, "every creature is brought into existence by an active original cause, is configured according to an archetype and ordered to an ultimate end, and is therefore one, true and good"[255] ; then those transcendentals can exist in the created being because they have first existed absolutely in God. But since God is not a mere essence, but is an essence that subsists in three concrete persons, then the transcendentals must be attributes of each of the divine persons and, therefore, also characterize them in their intratrinitarian happening. From this, Balthasar can now indicate what this might mean for a better understanding of the Trinity, starting from the relation of the transcendentals to one another in the created being:

> If the transcendentals govern absolutely all being, even the infra-spiritual, they nevertheless only reach their fullness where being is inwardly illuminated in spiritual being; and, if it remains true that a perfect love presupposes also a perfect knowledge (and in this sense the Augustinian order of the processions is not to be abandoned), nevertheless the eternal self-dispossession (*unvordenkliche*), of the Father in favor of the Son is due precisely to a love that mentally surpasses being and its self-knowledge .[256]
>
> Therefore, the eternality (*unvordenklichkeit*) of the self-surrender or self-emptying that makes the Father first and foremost the Father is not to be attributed to knowledge, but only to gratuitous love, which shows this to be the "transcendental par excellence"[257] .

Thus, having been able to anchor the transcendentals in the hypostatic process of the Trinity - from the moment that without the hypostatic process "one cannot speak of a divine being or essence"[258] - also allows us to glimpse something of the ineffable Trinitarian process and mystery. That is, in the Trinity love is the transcendental par antonomasia, which is expressed in the Trinitarian kenosis, which is the positive self-giving of God in the surrender of the complete divine essence in the processions. That is why love is what characterizes in the most radical way every being, because it includes in it both knowledge, unity and beauty. The transcendentals are then also a reflection of the deepest intratrinitarian reality.

The "other" created. A last Trinitarian structure present in creation

serves Balthasar -in addition- to deduce a consequence with respect to the condition of possibility of creation within the intratrinitarian reality[259] . This is his well-known reflection on the "real distinction"[260] between being and entity -which runs through everything created- and which mysteriously refers to a difference in God, that is, to his Trinitarian condition. Indeed, if the hypostases in God are necessary -because they are God's form of subsistence- and we know that the world, on the contrary, is contingent -since it might not exist and, in fact, being is not subsistent in itself but only in entities-; then there is an impassable abyss between God and the creature, but there must also be a link or bridge between the two, since otherwise the world could not exist at all -since being does not give subsistence to itself-. This link lies in the presence of the "other" in God, which makes the existence of a created other possible and positive. The basic affirmation is: if the Son is the other *in* God, the created image is the other *of* God, an image that can subsist only in that other *in* God. The consequences are twofold: (1) Since the other in God (the Son) arises from the love of God (the Father) and the other of God (the world) was also created by the love of God, then both are in a positive relation (it is neither fall nor degradation of God), and the created can subsist in God. (2) The creature necessarily presupposes a form of difference in God, and that is precisely in the hypostatic processions. Therefore, Balthasar succeeds in discovering in the real distinction between being and entity an ontological "difference" that refers to a difference in God, which revelation shows us as Trinity .[261]

2. *The language of the Logos incarnate.* As useful as the images presented above may be, however, they all have two fundamental limitations: they were not used by Jesus and do not appear in the Bible; and their gaze is from the bottom up, that is, they are a human attempt and not a divine revelation. Hence, it is necessary to take a second path - much more direct and unique - to find in creation a word about the Trinity: to look at Jesus himself and how he reveals the Father, as the exegete of the Father.

God expresses himself through the humanity of Jesus. We have to remember that the Old Testament affirmed, without hesitation, the

invisibility of God, which has been maintained in the New Testament. This means, from a philosophical point of view, that between God and the created "there is nothing that both can call common and neutral; there dominates between them pure otherness, and if, nevertheless, in this radical distance [...] a relationship is established, it is solely on the foundation of a divine grace that obeys no other reason than itself". This relationship in the Bible is called covenant. However, this insurmountable difference was "overcome" by Jesus ("in the double Hegelian sense" of preserving and, at the same time, putting an end to it) who, as the interpreter of the Father, affirms that he who sees him, sees the Father (Jn 14:9)[262] . This means that Jesus unveils the invisibility of God, but he does so from his own visibility, that is, from his own humanity; and with that, in spite of revealing him, he maintains the invisibility of the Father. The way to carry out this "paradoxical" action is to make transparent in his humanity "something more" than mere humanity. Indeed, although Jesus has a true and complete humanity in every sense, "nevertheless, as man, he appears with respect to other men as the Totally Other"[263] . This is manifested in those affirmations of Jesus in which he says that we are of this world, but he is not of this world, that he is from above, that no one knows where he comes from, and that he existed before Abraham (Jn 8:58). But this distance is always expressed within human nature - which is common to every human being - as a superiority that is, at the same time, abasement and obedience. In this way his whole being is a claim and a vindication, but it is not a vindication of himself, but refers fundamentally and always to the Father. "This shows that the Totally Other in the man Jesus with respect to all other men [...] is to be interpreted as a 'totally other being' *within* the identical and perfect human nature"[264] . His superiority and his humiliation are human and, therefore, any interpretation of Jesus (and of the Father in him) is anthropomorphic - in the sense that it is under human coordinates - and, therefore, the interpreted must be recognized *in the* interpreter. In Jesus everything is human, and all that is divine in Jesus appears in the human and in the human way. This means - as we have already said - that the Son

makes the Father present *through* his incarnation, through his whole finite being. This is the key to the language of the incarnate *Logos*. He uses a human language, culturally situated, to express himself and fulfill his mission. With this, Jesus supposes and assumes the character of the image of the human being and of his culture, through which the one who is the absolute image of the Father can present himself. This is the hermeneutical key of the Logos incarnate. This is why we can speak of God and know God as Trinity starting from the human condition. We have already spoken about this in the previous chapter when we referred to the manifestation of the glory of the Father . [265]

In synthesis, Balthasar, in order to refer to the Trinity, always and fundamentally begins from the *analogia entis,* as a basic element inscribed in creation[266] , but at the same time, sustaining the inescapable principle of Lateran IV: "One cannot affirm so much similarity between the Creator and the creature, without having to affirm greater dissimilarity" (DH 806). With these two metaphysical foundations, Balthasar, starting from the economic Trinity, can make - with sense and truth - affirmations about the immanent Trinity, but always maintaining the axiom referred to: every analogy must be continually corrected by an ever greater dissimilarity. The latter applies with much greater force to the most crucial aspects and moments where Jesus reveals the Trinity, particularly in his paschal mystery[267] . But it is important here to emphasize that Balthasar's intention is not to inquire into internal aspects of the immanent Trinity - an otherwise impossible thing - but rather, given that God in Jesus has revealed himself as love - i.e. Trinity - his intention is simply to seek those characteristics that this Trinity should have in order to manifest itself as such, that is, its conditions of possibility. "He is seeking to lay an immanent theological foundation for God's action in the economy of salvation"[268] . Then, Jesus being the *analogia entis concreta*[269] , he himself is an image, an expression and a word *of the* Father and, therefore, a presence of the Trinity, in such a way that his language, insofar as expression/image/word of himself, is also an adequate and true word about the Trinity. This is why Balthasar, in using the language of parables, not only applies a language that is

open to other forms of intelligence, but, above all, opens up the possibilities so that, from faith, the transcendent reality that he himself carries can be understood. In this way, by using metaphors and symbols, he allows the intelligence to open up to ineffable divine realities. However, we must be very clearly aware that, from created analogical realities we can indeed refer to divine realities (in particular, to his being love), but only by affirming that God - in order to be indeed love - should be "something like..."[270] . The latter is another novelty in Balthasar and stems from the conviction that everything "good" and "positive" created, precisely because it is such, must somehow also possess a correlate in the Trinity. We must now look at this more closely.

Reversal of the order between archetype and image to speak of the Trinity

Finally, we have here an aspect that is very characteristic and novel in Balthasar's reference to the Trinity. According to what we said at the beginning of this chapter, Balthasar wants to take to the limit of what is possible to think and say the principle that the economic Trinity authentically and truly reveals the immanent Trinity. This is especially characteristic in his reflection on the passion of the Son, which reflects something of the "heart" of the Trinitarian reality (a theme that we will have to review in greater depth in the next chapter)[271] . However, that is not the only thing. He also tries another path -and draws the consequences from it-, starting from an aspect that, for the rest, was already present in high scholasticism, but which he once again takes to the limit, by inverting the point of view: "Creation is included in the Trinity as in its indispensable presupposition. 'The possibility of creation rests on the reality of the Trinity. A non-trine God could not be a creator' (Gerken)"[272] . What this means is well known and Balthasar has expressed it at various points throughout his work: the temporal emergence of the creature derives freely from the eternal generation of the Son, that is, the processions are the ultimate cause of the existence of creatures. In such a way that, given already the creation, the intradivine procession and the extradivine mission "are for the divine persons the same and

unique thing"[273] . From this we deduce two things: (1) that the missions have been carried out precisely so that the human being may return to the Father; but also that, (2) since we have been created in the image of God - who is Trinitarian - then the qualities of the Son and of the Spirit are equally marked in us - as a model is in its copy - and thus, in the return to the Father, the characteristics that we already had in creation are brought to fullness[274] . From here Balthasar draws a preliminary conclusion for our theme:

> This scholastic doctrine shows that the *mysterium* of being is not a closed mystery, but that it expresses itself, that it reveals itself; but, at the same time, it means that its self-expression is not a necessary natural event, but a free gift. But for creatural thought to be able to see these two things together without contradiction requires the free revelation of the intradivine mystery, which - essentially different from the creature - appears, nevertheless, as the condition of the possibility of its knowledge of being (and there also of itself). The creatural logic can only be correctly evaluated as an analogous participation of an absolute Logos that looks back on itself to its (paternal) derivation and looks from itself to the Spirit of free love, which emanates from it and from its origin. Also the formal creatural logic is based and coined in a Trinitarian way . [275]

This means that all creation is marked, not simply by the essence of God, but by his threefold personality. A Trinitarian imprint is inscribed in creation, so that, just as the Logos in the Trinity always derives from the Father and with him causes the Spirit to proceed, in some way that same Trinitarian reality is permanently expressed in all creation. This has been formulated, for example, when theology has tried to find traces of the Trinity in creation, as Richard of St. Victor or Augustine did. But here Balthasar attempts still *a new step*, which is the inverse, that is, if all creation is marked with Trinitarian traces and is a good creation, then somehow - and here is Balthasar's "going to the limit" - everything created that is good, must have a correlate in the Trinity; and if the Trinity is based on the generation of the Son by love, that is, on the existence and presence of the other in God, everything in creation that has to do with the process of making the other exist and letting the other exist, and everything that has to do with the relationship with the other, in some way must also be present in the Trinity. Balthasar exemplifies this on the basis of some created characteristics, which he "discovers" mysteriously present also in the Trinity, always on the understanding that the dissimilarity is greater

than the similarity, but that, nevertheless, there must be *"something like..."* in the Trinity. It is clear that these characteristics do not pretend to unveil the mystery of God, but only to make explicit the conditions of possibility for him to reveal himself as a God who defines himself as love. Let us look at the most important ones.

Being, happening and becoming. In God the essence exists in the persons and not independently of them, therefore, the essence exists as relations and these are generation and proceeding. Therefore, God subsists in Himself as eternal *being,* but He is also an eternal *happening,* which is not temporal and which cannot dispense at any moment of the ontological consideration of that happening . God at all times is an eternal happening. Here, in God, there are two things that for us appear as opposites: eternal or absolute being and happening. But it is necessary to say that it is not an event in the human sense, created - with the meaning of "becoming" - but ineffably an event that always *is*. However, in spite of this, it is shown here that all human and created "becoming" and "becoming" is a reflection of the eternal, Trinitarian happening, which is identical to its essence .[276]

Two things can be concluded from this: (1) Contingent being is a created image of the intradivine proceeding being. Indeed, in every creature its non-divine being appears clearly, since the creature both cannot procure its own being for itself and cannot guarantee its essence from its participation in universal being. However, that contingent existence is a created image of intratrinitarian mobility, since "essences in their singularity are due to that divine goodness which places them 'in the flow of all being, from God' (S.Th. I, 45, 4 ad 1), so that being only through them and in them can have its unity (which transcends them all) and the reciprocal diversity of the essences reproduces the intradivine opposition of the hypostases." then "as the divine persons are themselves in transcending to the ever-Other, so also the created essences are themselves only in the transcendent reference to their first foundation (from which the overall being flows) and to their destiny to surrender (to the ever-next; therewith, concretely, through all the individual, to being as a whole)"[277] . (2) Becoming, too, is founded on the absolute. Although it

is true that in eternal life there is no becoming because it would mean lack of something, nevertheless, since peace within God is not rigid, but is eternal mobility, since the divine persons are always exchanging their whole being and are not delimited neither by time nor by space, since they are eternal. God must therefore be defined, rather than as "stability" or "non-becoming", above all as "always more", as "movement in excess", "becoming in excess", because it belongs to the essence of love that it is never satiated in the beloved. With this, Balthasar can say that in God there is something like a constant mobility, a becoming in excess, something like a constant happening. Indeed, man's insatiable quests are the fruit of God's infinite vitality, which invites him to always more. With these consequences we have arrived at the core of Balthasarian thought, which finds within the Trinity - in a sublime way - those things that on this earth are an expression of love. In all this - found in *Theodramatica* V - he follows very closely the work of Adrienne von Speyr .

Positivities. From the above it follows that those things in human life that are positive and necessary for establishing a relationship and for love must somehow also be found in God. Balthasar sets out three.

(1) *Distance* is something positive because it allows the existence of the other, and the existence of the other is something absolutely good, because it is what allows there to be love, insofar as mutual donation. And we know that in God there is the divine and absolute other, which makes God an interpersonal Trinity. Now, in this divine other, God has created and can love every other created being, because in God distance and unity are not opposed, since the three persons are one God. From this it can be deduced that in God there is something like a "distance" that allows the divine other and the created other to exist[278] . The Father can love the Son because he is in front of him, because as Son he is not the Father, and because there is a "distance" between the two that allows the existence of love.

(2) A certain *passivity* to let (the other) do and *be surprised* by his existence is something positive because it allows the novelty of love. In this sense, we see that in the Trinitarian happening there is also a form of passivity in the fact that in each person the activity of one is

opposed to the activity of the other. That is: the act of generating, proper to the Father, is an active power, and the acts of the Son and the Spirit are a passive power, insofar as they are the aptitude to be generated and to proceed, respectively. But, likewise, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit there is an active power, which is the power to allow oneself to be generated or to proceed; which is also a true and active power to separate oneself from what one has received, so that he who gives does not lose that which he has given, nor lose himself. We can even see that in the Father a letting be is given to the Son and in the Son a letting be is given to the Father, so that he generates it. In this way we understand that for absolute love, receiving and letting be, as well as doing and giving, are essential. Giving, receiving and letting be in the Trinity are essential, absolute and eternal, since the Father at all times is generating the Son, but does so with the cooperation of the Son himself who lets himself be generated, and the same is true with respect to the Holy Spirit. Thus, one can say that there is love in both giving and receiving. In the Trinity no one wants to be the other, but they let the other be himself; and all give to the other all that is their own and thus place their own freedom at the disposal of the other. With all this we can conclude that in the Trinity there is also something like a certain passivity in letting the other be and do, which allows the existence of that permanent surprise which is proper to love. Although in God there is no becoming or change, this does not mean that there are no surprises, but on the contrary, there is the permanent surprise of love, of being/being that is always new and surprising .[279]

(3) The positivity of *time* and *space* is also emphasized because both time opens space for an event to take place, and space needs time to be penetrated. This likewise refers back to something in God. While it is clear that the trinitarian process is eternal and permanent and, therefore, is verified in an eternal present; yet, if eternal generation implies a *prius* of the Father, where the Son is eternally in expectation of being generated and, at the same time, eternally experiencing the fulfillment of that superabundant generation; then that is the archetype of time, proper to the creation in becoming. The same thing

happens with space. The hierarchical distance -being Father of the Son- replaces what in the creature is space. Space consists simply in "giving place" to the freedom of the one who gives and the one who is given, who receives his being itself from the freedom of the giver, but, at the same time, also separates himself from him, so that the giver does not lose his being either. It is the space of freedom, which gives it its vitality of relationship. In the mutual liberation of the divine persons there is an essential space of love, where distance and unity unite in an ineffable way. Thus, in the Trinity - in the divine processions - there is something like a time and a space, which are, in turn, the archetype of created time and space .[280]

> Hence, every authentic positivity of the order of creation must be consigned to "immortality," where what was said at the beginning about the richness of the *analogia trinitatis* will acquire new meaning. The greater the Trinitarian richness of our image of God, the more resounding will be our YES to the eternal consummation of the world created and redeemed in God . [281]

Obviously, nothing of what has been said adds "something" to God, since none of this can be thought of in a quantitative way, but only from the absolute and full freedom of the divine being, a freedom that has no why, and that "in the Trinitarian self-communication" finds "its own necessity". Therefore, in this freedom of self-communication is incorporated - in an always sovereign freedom - creation and all that is positive in it .[282]

Let us conclude by recognizing that this entire chapter has shown us the depth of Balthasar's Trinitarian thought. Precisely for this reason the *Trilogy* does not have a "volume" dedicated "exclusively" to the Trinity, nor should it be thought that its three parts are divided into the three Trinitarian persons (but rather into the three transcendentals of being). Rather, the Trinity structures and permeates his entire work: "in the three parts he speaks of the Trinity of God"[283] . And with all these last examples he also wanted to emphasize - to the limit - the Trinitarian structure of the whole of creation, as well as of revelation. In this sense it can be said that Balthasar is an authentically Trinitarian theologian. This can be seen in the following themes, all of which are permeated by the Trinitarian aspect.

III. Possibility of a relationship between finite and infinite freedom

We can affirm that the core of the *Trilogy* is the *Theodramatic,* since in it human salvation understood as drama, insofar as God's action with man - in Christ[284] - is exposed. But this necessarily supposes the existence of an authentic relationship and true dialogue between God and the human being, and therefore, it supposes the existence of freedom and reason in both dialoguers, *conditio sine qua non* for any dialogue. In this way, the freedom of the characters to properly develop a drama is what sustains the entire *Theodramatic,* precisely because this freedom can unfold in one way or another, depending on the will of the actors. That is why Balthasar, after having delivered the dramatic instruments in volume I of this second part of his *Trilogy,* begins volume II by dealing at length with the relationship between God's infinite freedom and finite human freedom. A historical determinism (gnosticism) or a history deployed as "necessary" (idealism) would be the opposite of a drama. But given the different ontological quality of those in dialogue in this drama, a basic question arises: Is it possible for man to be free if God is truly all-powerful? And if man is truly free, is that not a diminution of God's power? Or, put another way, does God's greatness really leave room for human freedom? Can both, at the same time, be free? All these questions are summed up in the great issue of the relationship-and in general the possibility of that relationship-between finite human freedom and infinite divine freedom. This is a central paradox, proper to the relationship between God and the human being, which must be studied carefully because there human life is at stake both its relationship with God and the possibility of developing a truly "human" and free life. This is a very important theme for Balthasar and central to his theology, which we must now review.

As is to be expected, this theme encompasses various aspects of human life and, therefore, has an anthropological character. But not

simply of philosophical anthropology, but rather of theological anthropology, since it deals specifically with the relationship of the human being with God, assuming freedom as something characteristic of the human being. To this he will dedicate a large part of the second volume, focused precisely on theological anthropology. But it is also a Christological theme, since man carries out his own drama precisely "in Christ". To this he will dedicate the third and fourth volumes. And it is also a Trinitarian theme, since it implies reviewing the possibilities and reasons -which must be Trinitarian- for there to have been a true and free creation of finite freedoms, and not an emanation or fall from the divine. This will be seen at the end of volume three and in a large part of volume five. In such a way that this theme of the relationship between finite and infinite freedom runs basically throughout the *Theodramatic,* since it is the *stantis et cadentis* theme of a possible theological drama. This expresses its importance, but also the complexity of the subject, because it implies its relationship with many other contents. For this reason, when dealing with the argument it will always be necessary to keep in mind the other themes, but they will be seen gradually later on. One of the complex aspects of Balthasar's thought, but at the same time part of its richness, is the interrelation between all its contents, because his theology is based on the mutual interiority of the three transcendentals and, therefore, each argument must be understood in relation to the others.

Having said this caveat, we will now present only the core of this theme: how is it possible and under what conditions can there be true freedom in the human being in his relationship with God, in such a way that he can allow himself to be led by God without losing, for that very reason, his full freedom. This is what Balthasar has called *the risk of being together* of infinite freedom and finite freedom. We will do so this time following Balthasar's own development, fundamentally in *Theodramatics* II and somewhat in *Theodramatics* III, since there he dwells specifically on this theme.

General theological framework for the development of the drama of liberties

Before dealing directly with the relationship between freedoms, Balthasar introduces the subject by exposing three aspects that justify and give a theological framework to this development. On the one hand, he shows the relationship between aesthetics and dramatics, indicating their intimate relationship and noting that dramatics is included in and somehow also follows from aesthetics itself. Then he points out some examples of how theology has always kept in mind this dramatic character of the economy. And, finally, he exposes the existential or scenic framework in which this encounter of freedoms is presented and developed, that is, the world as God's creation.

Aesthetic-dramatic relationship

Since *Theodramatics* follows *Theological Aesthetics,* Balthasar begins by explaining the passage from aesthetics to dramatics and their intimate connection. In every manifestation of reality and, in particular, in revelation, two aspects are given in the same event: (1) what is manifested and perceived, in that same manifestation (2) invites a response, which has to be given with the whole historical existence. Indeed, we have seen in *Theological Aesthetics* that the beautiful form manifests itself to the one who perceives it and, at the same time, it is graciously given, that is, it is perceived as a gift that is offered. This giving and offering is, at the same time, a word, an expression that emerges from the depths of the form and that says something of itself and says something to the one who perceives it (hence its intimate relationship also with the *Theological*). Then, the intellection of that form supposes the freedom and the availability to apprehend the message of that form. Hence "the form and the word in the form is an awakening and an appeal; awakening the *freedom* to attend to the appeal that proceeds from the form"[285] . Thus the passage from the aesthetic to the dramatic - and linked to its passage to the theological - is given in the fact that, in the face of existence every human being in his act of perception can open or close himself to the light of existence that is kindled in front of him: it is a question of seeing or not seeing, responding or not responding.

But the phenomenon is even more profound: "He who is affected by something truly significant does not remain simply in the generic or in

the perspective of an overall vision, but is touched by an arrow in the most intimate part of his heart. He is the one who is alluded to"[286] . So drama-as a continuation of aesthetics-means that the one who is touched by the form is in reality a chosen one. And if this form is *God himself* who makes himself present to give him a task - the fruit of a choice on God's part - then the one who is touched can never again be the same person as before, once the encounter in which he has received a specific vocation has occurred: "God does not show himself to anyone and does not snatch him away unless it is to send him"[287] . And in the face of all this, we can only surrender and trust in the One who has chosen us and who had already decided "for me". This choice is so universal that it embraces all reality and founds the whole being of each one and of the totality[288] . The dramatic is then understood as an existential response to a perceived manifestation, and that response presupposes and must necessarily be free. Therein lies the core and the great question (or problematic) of the relationship between freedoms in *Theodramatics,* due to the infinite and absolute quality of the one who manifests and calls; and the limitation and fragility of the one who perceives and must respond. So, does that really leave room for freedom? The whole *Theodramatic* and in general the whole *Trilogy* assumes it (and also shows it), since the core of the drama demands (and supports) the centrality of freedom in both actors; and therefore also the importance that this freedom can really exist in the human being. This justifies its treatment at the beginning of the *Theodramatic.*

Dramatic character of theology

Although Balthasar treats this dramatic and paradoxical character - the product of the action of freedoms - of God's relationship with the human being in a characteristic and, in this sense, novel way, it cannot be said that it has passed unnoticed by theology. Indeed, the permanent objective of all theology is precisely to explain the drama between God and the human being, but where it itself is also part of that drama, insofar as it is a believing reflection of that encounter of the human being with God to which it must respond. If "all revelation possesses [...] its point of unification in the definitive Word of God in Christ", that is to say, in Christ "the believer obtains the ultimate root

of its validity both for God's behavior and for his own"[289] , then the believer is called to allow himself to be led by the Word, in an attitude of humility and simplicity of faith that, from there, orders everything peripheral around the center. This is the salvific drama -interaction of freedoms- of human history.

That this relationship, based on mutual freedom, has a dramatic characteristic has always been recognized in theology, albeit from various forms of expression. For example, in the configuration of a theology of the covenant throughout the Old Testament, where it is understood as "a right of grace that reveals an essential property of God that is freely revealed and given and that obliges the chosen people to respond gratefully"[290] . It is a drama with a juridical component, which has choice, commitment, fulfillment/unfulfillment, judgment. Another way of expressing it has been to understand the drama of Christ as a struggle. Without falling into any Manichaean conception, it is understood that evil has an extraordinary force, but not superior to God, who must enter into combat from what is human and cannot leave the scene of the world, that is to say, he must fight from and in history. Thus God acts in Christ, with his life, death and resurrection, where the gratuitousness of God's infinite love and his definitive alliance with humanity is expressed[291] . This makes human existence a dramatic existence. The pre-Christian idea that the human being is a combatant, assigned to a combat post by the divine powers, was also assumed by Christianity, in the sense that life is a battle with a personal and social character in favor of the reign of God. If this idea is not reduced to a personal combat in the sphere of spirituality, then it has all the force of understanding existence as an open reality, carried forward by human and divine freedom. These and other theological forms and types of languages to express human existence as a free response to the divine call or vocation is what Balthasar exposes today as a dramaturgy or joint action of freedoms.

Scenic framework of the drama

The third general (introductory) aspect is the scenic framework in which this drama takes place. As in any stage play, the stage must be created specifically for this drama. The stage is in relation to the

drama and cannot be independent of it. The drama can only unfold on that stage. That is why it is important to understand on what stage the human drama unfolds. The stage is - biblically said - "the heavens and the earth"[292] , which must be understood theologically. Both are God's creatures. This clearly affirms two things. First, that God's glory rises above the heavens, even though God acts from there. "The immanence of the creator presupposes his transcendence"[293] . And, secondly, that there is a distance and tension between heaven and earth. Man is here below, on earth, and must recognize that grace comes from above, from heaven, which is "the place" from which God acts on man. This distance is indispensable to establish this drama that maintains the separation, but where at the same time, from the distance God acts with and for man. "The heaven-earth tension is therefore the presupposition of all theodramatics both on the part of God and on the part of man"[294] . And there is "the living paradox of a being who knows that he can only reach his fullness thanks to a grace over which he can have no claim"[295] . Thus God, in spite of his superiority, wants to be close to man and enter into relationship with him, in such a way that God's history with man will be the history between heaven and earth. In this way the whole movement between heaven and earth, in the Old Testament, is completely demythologized and comes to mean simply the revelation of God. All this acquires its definitive moment in the New Testament, where the cosmological images are transformed into dramatic ones, since the incarnation is understood as abasement and subsequent exaltation (that is, movement), which takes place in the midst of a profound dialogue that implies a free human response: the incarnation is a gift from above and the fruit of the woman; this is repeated in ecclesiology with the Church that comes from above but is here welcomed with faith. The two poles of this tension remain from creation to eschatology.

This heaven-earth relationship cannot be represented or explained structurally or gnostically, but only dramatically. A structural explanation means that everything that happens, in the end, is already written in the sky, and in the end it is predictable. It is the end of the drama. On the other hand, we know that "heaven and earth" have

been created for a drama and it is not possible to know how the end of the drama will be until its end unfolds. And this end is called metamorphosis or definitive transformation into something superior, where nothing will be lost, but transformed. In conclusion, the scene has been created just for this drama, and in its unfolding the scene itself is involved in the unfolding of the drama. However, it is also important to keep in mind that many things that determine the distance and/or approach between heaven and earth have already been decided in advance - by the action (= drama) of Christ - for the God-man relationship. For example, the triumph over sin, the action of the Church, the novissimos, etc. But none of this eliminates the sovereign task of each one to allow himself (or not) to be included in the drama. All are present on the scene with a purpose and a given action, but each one in turn must shape it with his availability to receive the Word from heaven and to configure it in his bosom in such a way as to make it bear fruit on earth with his freedom .[296]

The problem of finite and infinite freedoms is raised.

Having provided the theological and scenic framework in which the drama unfolds, Balthasar will now consider four aspects - in four successive steps - that have to do with the characteristics of the God revealed by Jesus Christ, in order to be able to judge more adequately his relationship with human freedom. Given the distance and difference between God and the human being, in order to understand their mutual relationship we must first of all keep in mind this *"distance"* and what it means, because God is not just another entity among all the beings in the world. So, *first* of all, Balthasar asks himself whether it is possible to speak of God as a "character" among other characters in a drama. For "theodramatics (as opposed to merely human dramatics) is only possible when 'God' (or 'a god' or an accredited representative of God) enters into the play of existence"[297] . This may even seem contrary to philosophy. In fact, in Neoplatonism and idealism, where God is an inaccessible "one" or "all" identical to us, there has been no drama. In contrast, there has been drama in the mythological epochs of antiquity and in the Christian baroque. Does

this not pose a problem for Balthasar?

It is indeed a great challenge. However, Christian biblical theology, in the face of these and other philosophical postulates - and mythological inconsistencies - has counterposed "an unrenounceable double postulate": (1) the freedom of the Absolute; and (2) its sovereign possibility of creating from its freedom other finite freedoms, but authentic freedoms[298] . And, in fact, in the whole biblical narrative it appears clearly that man's freedom can be - and actually has been - opposed to God's freedom, that is effectively what sin and unfaithfulness to God mean. Now, both the Fathers of the Church and all the great scholastics saw in this no contradiction with the basic postulates of all philosophy. But this was because in all the "decisive points the Christian postulates" integrated and surpassed philosophy, and also did not remain with an anthropomorphic and almost mythical image of God, where God would be an "other" among others, an entity among many entities, even if he was thought of as an *ens perfectissimum* [= being or most perfect entity][299] . Therein lies the center of the question and its point of solution: in what way God is understood. So, first of all, God is indeed a "character" within the drama, but with very particular characteristics and completely different from everything created.

Thus - here Balthasar takes the *second* step in his reflection - only a *philosophically and biblically* adequate understanding of God - irrefutably with both characteristics - can resolve "the biblical paradox that God can be 'everything' (Sir 43:27) and yet man can be 'something', that God can be absolutely free without man's authentic freedom being hijacked, and that God shows his omnipotence precisely by communicating to his creatures an authentic identity". This involves two challenges:

> Firstly, *that theology takes seriously and includes in itself the explicit or implicit philosophy of man reflecting on the meaning of the world and of existence, and that it carries out its own reflection on biblical revelation together with this philosophically mediated reflection* .[300]

It is a question here, on the one hand, of tracing and bringing to light the philosophy that is implicit in the biblical account, beyond its language and literary genre; and, on the other hand, of seeking in all the existing philosophy of humanity, all those elements that allow us

to understand God authentically, in order to avoid being trapped in "reductive and falsifying anthropomorphisms" "in the interpretation of revelation"[301] . It is a matter of confronting the philosophical reflection of humanity with the revealed biblical data. But we must be very careful never to lose what is specifically biblical.

The second challenge consists in reflecting philosophically on two theological themes involved here, but in such a way as to take philosophy beyond itself, in order to understand the revealed mystery, which surpasses all philosophy. The first theme is the opposition existing between the infinite freedom of God and the finite freedom of man, in that abyss between the holiness of God and human sin. And the second theme has to do with God himself: it is the reality of God who is a "Not-Other", but that "within" this "Not-Other" there is an "Other", since God is a "Trinitarian" reality. In both themes philosophy is superseded, but at the same time, it can neither be eliminated nor unknown, so as to avoid all mythology. In both themes we find the mystery, but also the solution to the possibility of the existence of an infinite freedom together with a finite freedom. These themes will be developed extensively throughout the *Theodramatic.* Here philosophy and biblical revelation must come together to reflect on the concrete meaning for human life of the fact that God is Trinity and that the Son became incarnate and died for us.

Thirdly, it follows that only the Trinitarian condition of God effectively permits an authentic interrelation of freedoms. Indeed, it was only the revelation and action of God in the Son that showed the real possibility of an authentic reciprocal relationship between divine freedom and human freedom. This can be better understood if we consider that in antiquity freedom was centered above all in the socio-political sphere: in the *polis* [= city] man was free, although the citizen was also immediately before the divine law (*nomos*). But then, the passage to the Christian conception added two other new factors: "the substitution of the impersonal nomos (which now seems to have been sharpened in the Old Testament law) by a living and personal lord, whose service (at the same time personal and ecclesial insofar as equated with the polis) is liberating, the service of a free being; and

the reference of this freedom to the love of this lord, love to which only a liberated being can respond according to the measure of his love, as a service of love"[302] . Having then this renewed understanding of human freedom, Christianity also renewed its understanding of God. And this was important because if the human desire to attain an absolute freedom (its dimension of infinity) was not simply a fiction, then that absolute had to be "an infinite freedom by virtue of which and in which it can be realized as finite. This freedom must by its nature (insofar as infinite) be free enough to let finite freedom be free itself, or rather, since it is infinite freedom, it must first of all *give* freedom to finite freedom"[303] . On the other hand, a mere "idea" or Plotinus' "One" could not give that freedom. The Old Testament had not been able to solve this problem either, which is proven by the fact that the covenant was never possible to fulfill. Only the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart of every human being made it possible to fulfill the covenant. And that Holy Spirit was the fruit of the resurrection of Christ, who poured it into every heart.

Therefore, the solution was in the deepest sense a Christological solution, in two senses. Because the Spirit poured out in us is the Spirit of the Risen One (Jn 20:22), and because that Spirit - according to Irenaeus - had become accustomed in Jesus to dwell in the human being[304] , that is, his task was to make present and in some way *reproduce* the life of Christ in us. Now, this means that the "Christological" paradox is reproduced in us, that is, the union of Christ's finite and infinite liberties-without separation or confusion. In him, finite and infinite freedom coexisted without one disappearing in the other. So we can perceive that the center of the drama is fulfilled in the two wills of Christ, and that is the supreme point of reciprocity - without either being annulled- between the two freedoms. This reciprocity has been possible only as a double movement: from the finite to the infinite and from the infinite to the finite, simultaneous spiritualization of humanity and materialization of divinity. Only Christology gives anthropology its complete form and takes its measure from it. It clearly follows, then, that it was the Trinitarian revelation and, in particular, the incarnation of the Son, that made

possible the exercise of authentic human freedom in the relationship with God: in a perfect and unique way in Christ, and then in a participatory way in us. The knowledge and solution of the paradox of freedoms is of a theological order.

Finally, the *fourth* aspect that must be taken into account is the social character of freedom: a finite freedom is only given in interhuman coexistence, that is, one becomes free only in the interrelation between persons, in the free play of giving and receiving[305] . Therefore, the relationship of human freedom with divine freedom cannot be alien to the relationship with other human beings. Neither Antiquity nor the Old Testament could resolve this either, and it could only be understood in its foundation with the Trinitarian revelation, where the human being, created in the image of the Trinity, could see and experience the unity of both elements. In fact, "only in the light of the Christian image of God, the mediation that develops the freedom of the person receives through the community a value internal to freedom and constitutive of it"[306] . In the Trinity it is the relationship between persons that constitutes them as such, in their own freedom of being each one. In the same way, the ecclesial community, with its sacramental characteristics, participates in the freedom of each individual as God's mediation and empowerment of one's own freedom.

We can thus verify that the paradox of the two freedoms could only be truly resolved by the Trinitarian revelation of God, which is why this must be assumed when reviewing how it is possible that God, being perfectly free, leaves room for the human being to be authentically free, even though he is not God and even though God remains completely free and all-powerful. Having then introduced the main coordinates for understanding the subject, Balthasar can now describe the main characteristics of both finite freedom and infinite freedom, and then show how the two can be mutually interrelated without losing either of them.

Finite freedom

Balthasar describes finite freedom from its two fundamental

characteristics, but that both are in a dual (or polar) relation to each other: *self-dynamism* and *assent*. Hence, he first exposes their mutual dual relation, and then each one in particular.

The two pillars of freedom

First, he explains the polarity in which these two aspects of freedom meet. First of all, he notes that the basic and immediate experience of freedom is in a sense contradictory: is freedom possible when it is limited? This is the basic paradox of human freedom: we experience ourselves as free, but with a finite freedom. To enter into this mystery, Balthasar proceeds in two stages. First he reviews the basic human experience of the *cogito-sum,* as a pre-consideration to better understand the polar structure of finite freedom. He states, "If I apprehend something finite true or good, this act is accompanied by a self-presence in which two aspects meet inseparably"[307] : the act of knowing something concrete and actual and the habitual act of knowing that I exist and am knowing things. Thus, every cognitive act of something is accompanied by a self-presence of oneself, and the two things are inseparable. Indeed, the existence of the soul is habitually present to myself (Thomas). Now, in this self-presence there is yet another polarity: I know that I am an existent entity, but at the same time open to every other existent entity. Thus, in self-presence we also discover two things united: the absolute imparticipability of my I and the unlimited participability of being as such. It is the total incommunicability of the individual self and the total communicability of being. It is about the radical polarity of the created being, where in the common experience of being "I", from that same unmistakable singularity I arrive at "being" as totality. I am this unrepeatable being, and although I am a *being* I leave equally free space for the existence of innumerable other unrepeatable singular *beings*. My being by no means exhausts the possibilities of being. Thus, in my radical experience I can distinguish-but not separate-between "my" way of being and my perception of being as universally common. This unity is based on existence as such, on the *modus subsistentiae* [= way of existing in itself] .[308]

Balthasar began with this pre-consideration of the polarity of created

being because he discovered that it illuminates very well the *polar* structure of finite freedom. Starting from self-presence itself, he then proceeds to the second stage of his reflection. We recognize that in self-presence - within the light of being - lies a nucleus of freedom as inalienable self-possession. That is experienced as part of and united with self-presence. But at the same time that light of being is also "inseparably something intellectual and volitional; it is both understanding and affirming [... and, moreover,] it is the will that sets understanding in motion." And this self-possession is not simply self-intuition, but "is articulated *with* universal openness to every entity, going out of itself in the quest to know and love others, especially in the interhuman relationship". This openness is "so enormous that no entity [...] succeeds in fulfilling it". And yet it always maintains the freedom to affirm the value of things or to deny it as deficient. Freedom, then, as openness to every existing entity, can and does tend to each thing only from the point of view of the good, of its value for the person, without ceasing to be true that "the knowledge of the good *insofar as* good" removes from this tendency the aspect of pure interest[309] . Here the second pole of freedom has emerged: together with self-possession there is also necessarily a tendency towards the good insofar as "good for me". Indeed, the part loves the whole more than itself, in the sense that what is just must be willed by its justice, regardless of the pleasure - or less - it produces, because in that it finds the greatest good for itself. Every decision is always made for the sake of a good. So we have two poles in freedom: self-possession and the tendency to the good and the true; and although both poles are closely united they can never be reduced to each other[310] . They are two, united, inseparable, in polar tension, but irreducible to each other. "The first pillar of freedom is unequivocally 'given'; the second is both 'gift' and 'task'"[311] .

Thus it has become clear that finite freedom has two aspects that exist in polar tension, that is, where both are mutually referred to each other, but can never be reduced to each other; and from this permanent tension its very vitality is born.

Freedom as self-dynamism

This first aspect was well reflected upon by ancient philosophy, in such a way that the Fathers of the Church and later scholasticism were able to fruitfully use all this material for their own "theory of Christian freedom". That is why Balthasar treats it more synthetically. It is also a familiar theme. For Greek philosophy, the starting point was no longer political freedom, but the experience of self-possession and self-movement that are intrinsic to each person[312] . It is clear that the human being "possesses the consciousness of moving spiritually to himself, of being the cause of his wanting and choosing to be so and not otherwise"[313] . For Christianity it was then evident that finite freedom was the given presupposition for the whole biblical and Christian drama of God with humanity. Thus, from the beginning, against Gnostic determinism, Christianity affirmed this first pole of finite freedom: *autexousion* [= self-possession]. And "in a second moment it is made to see that the freedom thus given must simultaneously be realized in an unfinished process on earth within the framework of divine freedom"[314] . Indeed, this capacity for creaturely self-decision is something given by God as part of the properties of the creature . [315]But at the same time, the experience that finite freedom makes of its own limitation and indigence also serves it to learn that it can grow only by accepting the counsel of God (Irenaeus). Consequently, that freedom of choice is what allows the human being to be a true interlocutor of God; and furthermore, in a way, the human being "self-creates" himself according to his own freedom or self-possession.

With all these elements, Thomas developed a broad doctrine on freedom, "a doctrine that has its core in the indissoluble union of the two poles of finite freedom in the central vision of *esse* as the foundation of both individual being and communication with the absolute"[316] . In this sense he recognizes that freedom of the will in general - against all determinism - and freedom of particular choice are in reality two aspects of the same problematic. But in addition to this double aspect, it must be noted that "every free will can only aspire to something under the point of view of the good", and "implicitly of the absolute good", which is God, and in all this it is

determined only by itself. With this in fact Thomas already enters into the second pole - which we have to see below - whereby once again the indissolubility of the two poles of freedom is being demonstrated. "For with the self-determination of the will (as in the patristic tradition) the *logikon* [= the rational] is implied, that is, the knowledge of being in its totality and in the appreciation of entities and values under the point of view of being and good, to such an extent that the two dimensions cannot be apprehended except in reciprocal priority"[317] . Indeed, in order to be able to judge something, reason is always necessary, and with this the human being becomes the cause of himself, not in the sense that he grants being to himself, but in the sense that in his will there is a *desiderium naturale* [= natural desire] toward full and unsurpassable self-possession - which should coincide with the possession of being as such - in such a way that the person aims to realize the fullness in an absolute that he himself - as the cause of himself - is not capable of realizing by himself. In all this we see the importance of self-possession, but at the same time the intrinsic and ineliminable relationship with the other pole, which is the search for the good and the truth. It is assent, which will now be dealt with .[318]

Freedom as assent

Balthasar will devote more time to this second pole because here there is a more specific Christian contribution: it is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, we have already hinted that self-possession implied a second thing: every self-movement is at the same time necessarily a *decision* - judgment - to move toward..., and that decision is always oriented according to some "reason" of good for one. "Freedom is the fact of being freely placed in a superior attitude of 'indifference'", which can choose - even must choose - since she can be realized only through decisions around existence and all that exists[319] . This openness towards the other is both indigence (I need the other) and richness (I can freely give myself to the other), and therefore I can use this openness selfishly or generously. And so it is with all other finite freedoms in their mutual relations. All freedoms-human beings- are mutually enriching in their mutual openness. This then implies

that "the relation between finite and infinite freedom, in the end, cannot be resolved except by admitting a voluntary openness on the part of infinite freedom as well." Since finite freedom can neither grant itself its own origin nor attain its end by having recourse only to its own goods, there must necessarily be a self-opening of infinite freedom. With this basic approach, Balthasar now questions himself on the essential point: "The crucial question will now be whether and how (in the case of the aforementioned self-opening) finite freedom can be fulfilled in the infinite without questioning the datum of departure, but also without somehow reducing infinite freedom to the finite or lowering it to the level of a being among others"[320] . Balthasar will elaborate his answer, as so often, by making a brief historical journey through the development of ideas.

The theme is presented on the basis of four historical moments. First, he notes that Christianity found in the Neoplatonic and Stoic "*formal* scheme" an answer to "the relation between the Absolute (and the One) and the manifold coming from it"[321] . That schema can be expressed, in the words of Nicholas of Cusa, with the following formulation: "God can only be the 'Wholly Other' insofar as he is the 'Not-Other'". From this, Christianity, with the biblical revelation on which it was based, was able to give a solid content to that formal scheme, which helped it to understand adequately how a finite freedom can proceed from and subsist in an infinite freedom. Thus Augustine expressed it as follows: *Deus interior intimo meo* [= God is more interior than the deepest part of me]. This means that the Christian response to that Neoplatonic formulation was the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which, infused as "love of God poured into the hearts of believers, accomplishes both things at the same time: liberating finite freedom by bringing it to authentic full freedom, and this precisely by introducing it into the participation of infinite freedom"[322] . This second pole, then, must be understood as *theonomia,* but it must be clear that this cannot eliminate *self-possession.* It is specifically a *grace* - the gift of God himself - that grants adoptive filiation that moves one to act like the Son - obedient to the will of the Father - without each believer ceasing for that reason to be himself with all his

autexousion. This has been an essential point in Christian anthropology, which was developed in the West by Augustine and in the East by Gregory of Nyssa, and from which Thomas made his synthesis. Hence Balthasar now explains each of these three contributions.

The West had its high point with Augustine. For him, finite freedom is "the soul's own rational movement, in which the self possesses itself in freedom," which supposes "a free capacity for judgment. Now, what is important in this affirmation is that for Augustine this finite freedom, endowed with a capacity for judgment, "can only be realized and come to act as such freedom (*libertas*) in the bosom of infinite freedom"[323] . But on the other hand, although the human being needs it, this infinite freedom is not something that is at the disposal of the human being, but it will always be a grace freely given as a "gratuitous indwelling of infinite freedom in finite freedom"[324] . This is the core of Augustine's argument: the relationship between finite and infinite freedom cannot be external (or exterior), as it was in the Old Testament and later also postulated by Pelagius. The relationship must be interior, as a condition of possibility for maintaining both freedoms, and therefore it is only possible when, as St. Paul says, "the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). The Holy Spirit is the infinite freedom that helps finite freedom to attain infinite freedom without dissolving this finite freedom.

In the East the path was different and reached its summit with Gregory of Nyssa. For him, finite freedom does not create itself, but every day it finds itself existing as a gift given to its own existence, but at the same time, at every moment this freedom finds itself renewed, that is, renewed as a gift, because it is permanently emerging - receiving itself - from infinite freedom. Consequently, "this constant self-conception of finite freedom triggers in it an infinite movement, namely: to realize itself not by detaching itself from that source but by resembling it." Thus it becomes clear that "finite freedom as finite" (*autexousion*) is only realized in the infinite[325] . Gregory finds the foundation for this doctrine, on the one hand, in the

manifestation of Jesus Christ, who gives us space in himself to realize our freedom (we live "in Christ"); but as can be clearly perceived, he also finds a good foundation in Neoplatonic philosophy. Indeed, Plotinus "had described the *nous* [...] as an eternal spiritual movement towards the One, as nostalgia". That *nous* is what corresponds, in Gregory, to the finite freedom that comes from God - albeit as an act of creation - and sustained at all times by him. Thus, if in God "will of God is identical with God", since God wills what is; and if in Plotinus "the *nous* is the most direct image of the One"; then "finite freedom in all its purity, that is, as pure movement coming from infinite freedom and tending towards the same, is the most direct image of God"[326] . Everything comes from God and returns to God. Thus the total dependence of finite freedom on infinite freedom is well understood without it losing any of its self-possession: because it has its origin in God, who makes it subsist precisely as true freedom - even if it is finite - since it subsists in God, the only source of freedom.

St. Thomas united both currents and elaborated his own philosophical and theological synthesis. He assumed Gregory's structure and the Augustinian desire to possess God. Thus, for Thomas , the longing "to possess and contemplate God appears, [...] first of all, as the dynamism of finite freedom towards its formal object, the good as such, which, finally, in a last decision of the freedom of choice, comes to reveal itself as divine freedom"[327] . Now, the particular characteristic of Thomas is his argumentation based on his equally well-known reflection on being, which we have already mentioned. In this respect - in synthesis - he affirms that, in the perception of real being as true, it also appears that it is good, in such a way that a double polarity is thus manifested in created being. On the one hand, the polarity present in the consciousness of being an *individual* existent that does not exhaust being, which for that very reason is open to the *totality* of being -which its own existence cannot exhaust-, with which its own indigence is also demonstrated. And, on the other hand, the polarity of being open to the totality of beings and to being as such, which implies -necessarily- both letting being be as true and good, and also letting being be in its own existence (which is as important and

radical as the former). In other words, the created being moves in two polarities: the tension between being an individual and being together with a totality, and the tension between the goodness of existing and the goodness of letting others be as something also good for oneself. When other entities are allowed to be (in respect of their freedom, truth and goodness) it is because they are desired as good. In this brief synthesis it has been possible to appreciate - from a philosophical perspective - the authentic foundation of the non-contradiction between one's own self-possession and the openness to the "other" that fulfills one's own freedom. It can be formulated as follows: we experience that others are a good for finite freedom, therefore finite freedom welcomes them in itself, and with that it itself is fulfilled; then, with all the more reason absolute and infinite freedom will be equally a good for finite freedom and, therefore, to welcome it will be the supreme good and total fulfillment.

Having affirmed the polarity of freedom, Thomas still faces two more questions. In the first place, he wonders where this self-possession comes from as a characteristic of finite freedom. The answer is simple: it is one of the many possibilities of existing, that is, it is a form of "being". Indeed, finite freedom has its origin "in the inscrutable depths of being itself" of which the spirit (= rational being) essentially participates. This means that thinking, valuing and discerning - that which characterizes the spirit - is simply one of the many forms of being. Self-possession is simply a characteristic of spiritual *being*. So being itself is that which gives self-possession as one of its many forms of subsistence. Now, we know that being only presents itself in entities, and therefore is not subsistent by itself; then the second question arises: "how can a non-finite reality without self-subsistence [(= being) ...] be realized in finite subsistent centers?" This question basically means the following: how does what exists exist if everything is finite and non-subsistent by itself? Here philosophy reaches its limit. The answer would have to be able to attribute the cause of all reality "to the subjectivity of total being." But this is not a question that can be answered with certainty, even if - as Paul supposes in Rom 1:19ff - in being there opens up for us from itself "a subjectivity coextensive

with being in its totality, not participatory, but with an infinite reason, an infinite will, an infinite freedom"[328] , that is, in being there is something like a natural revelation. If we accept that there has always existed such a self-manifestation of infinite being, as something proper to finite and spiritually existent being, then we must conclude that

> the finite spirit would always be placed before a last decision: That of seeing in the necessary formal object the hint (*phaneron*) of the absolute, creative and personal cause, i.e. of God, and thus recognizing (*doxazein*) one's own freedom as immanent not only in the all-embracing framework of being, but also in infinite freedom; likewise, that of consequently contemplating the immanence of divine freedom and infinite will in one's own finite freedom and will as the ultimate foundation of one's own factual freedom .[329]

In other words, the existence in entities of an infinite reality but not subsistent in itself (= being) not only shows us the necessity of there being an infinite reality subsistent by itself that has created everything (= God), but also indicates to us that in finite reality (= the human being) an infinite reality (= God himself) can exist or subsist without destroying finite reality as such; even, on the contrary, giving to that finite reality all its reality and self-possession, as such. Thus, enlightened by theology, philosophy can accept that *Deus interior intimo meo.* This now opens the way for reflection on infinite freedom, that is, the freedom of God. Here we enter fully into what has been received through revelation.

Infinite freedom

Balthasar studies this topic from three perspectives. First, as he usually does, he takes a historical look at the way in which the subject has arisen and the *theological* content of infinite freedom as a characteristic of God. Then he asks how it is possible that, in the face of God, finite freedom can exist. And thirdly, on the basis of revelation, he shows concretely what has happened in God so that a finite freedom can exist "beyond" him.

Emergence, development and content of the Christian doctrine of infinite freedom

Balthasar affirms that it is an eminently New Testament theme, that is, Trinitarian:

The idea of infinite freedom in the sense of a personal capacity to dispose of oneself appears for the first time in the New Testament. There are a number of things that prepare it, both in philosophy and in the Old Testament, but the different fragments of meaning do not come together in a whole .[330]

Indeed, in the extra-biblical world we can find two ways of visualizing God's freedom. The first is given in an anthropomorphic conception of God -proper of polytheism-, where God is granted a personal freedom -the most powerful of all-, but which is also, in the end, limited by his anthropomorphic form of being, even subjected to "human" passions. This is the case, for example, of Zeus. The second form -more refined- comes from philosophy, which, with Plotinus, reaches its highest peak: this would be "a suprapersonal freedom, which corresponds to the idea of the good dominating over every finite being"[331] . But, although there is a "supreme interpenetration between being and freedom", nevertheless, "one can speak neither of a relation of creation of participated freedom nor of its determination and judgment"[332] . "The One is free because it does not depend on anything"[333] and so it is also transcendent, however, it lacks a personal character. That is the great limitation of philosophy, and in particular of Neoplatonism, which instead in other things reached so high. It will then be the Old Testament that will add the *personal* character to the transcendent God: Yahweh appears as a God liberator of his people, who has seen their suffering and who defeats all enemies because he is more powerful than they; and no one can limit his absolute freedom, since no one can limit the power of the Almighty. But still, in the Old Testament human freedom did not have "an inner access to divine freedom"[334] . This will come only with the New Testament, where in Jesus Christ human freedom is admitted *into* divine freedom through the work of the Holy Spirit. And this will mean at the same time that infinite freedom can now also, itself, be within finite freedom. And that is the ultimate possibility for finite freedom. That already happened in Christ and it happens in those who accept the Holy Spirit.

But Christianity also developed and overcame another element of Greek philosophy: it always "felt the need for the world, in order not to remain meaningless, to be united by a necessary bond with the world of divine and eternal meaning"[335] through the logos, the idea,

eros, etc. But, from a theology of the creation -voluntary and free- of God, we know that this is not possible because in fact nothing of the created could exist. The world depends on the absolute freedom of God and is an expression of his absolute creative freedom. However, this in no way means that the world is disconnected from God or that it is residual, but on the contrary, although with full and absolute freedom, the world is the object of the permanent infinite and eternal love of God who does not regret the works that he has created (Num 23:29; Ml 3:6). This is the mystery of this love, which in God is eternal and indestructible. Nothing can suppress his love. If he willed to create out of a desire for love, he will remain forever in that love and in that desire for things to exist. And with this we have already given an answer to the contrary position: if the world is not necessary and depends on God's good pleasure, is it therefore the fruit of a whim, or is what exists deceptive? The question is not trivial. It points to the meaning of creation. The tension between necessity and absolute freedom is in reality a question about the link between truth and veracity, that is, about the reliability that gives me the reality as it is. The Old Testament already gave the answer when it stated that "God's truth is identified with his faithfulness" (the same word *emeth* is used for both meanings). "God's word is identified with his action", the word is one with his being. He himself engages in his action. All creation being then the work of God's word, "our trust in God's faithfulness cannot be separated for a moment from the knowledge of things"[336] . I can trust what things tell me about God. All this means that "logical truth cannot abstract from personal truthfulness," because both understanding of the world and proper behavior are based on a prior fidelity: God's infinite freedom in creation and in the covenant rests on God's fidelity to his own essence. God cannot contradict himself. If he is good, he creates good things. Ethical truth and logical truth are united: "Since the biblical covenant was sealed [...], the truth of the world and of man are indissolubly united with the truthfulness of God (who expects a similar response from man)"[337] . Thus creation, despite its non-necessity, affirms itself in God's trustworthiness, in his truthfulness, in other words, in his love that is eternally trustworthy

(Dn 3:24-45).

Having resolved this and starting from this brief historical journey, Balthasar now synthesizes what exactly can be said about infinite freedom in itself, something that can only be answered starting from revelation, in two of its major themes: (1) from a certain philosophical reflection implicit in the biblical affirmations, and (2) in the implications of the Trinitarian doctrine. Both theological contents say something about the infinite freedom of God. It begins then with three basic philosophical affirmations that follow from the biblical revelation. (1) The one who says "God" affirms the existence of an infinite reality, on which all finite realities depend, since "the total being of the world" "cannot subsist except in finite essences." On the other hand, (2) "the foundation of the total reality of the world [...] can be neither the total reality of universal being (since it does not subsist in itself) nor the sum of subsistent beings (since these are of themselves finite and caused), but only an infinite being which, as such is immediately subjective and infinitely self-available, self-illuminating, so that it is of itself absolutely free, since it has neither limit nor concurrence of any part." (3) "For this reason, its freedom is not a singular act either, resulting from its essence, but coincides with the actuality of its essence"[338] . So much for philosophy. It will be the Trinitarian revelation that will now add new elements.

Balthasar then deduces from the intratrinitarian activity - as limited as our knowledge of it may be - a word about the characteristics of God's freedom. The fact that in God there are two processions is decisive for understanding the true meaning of his freedom in its relation to other freedoms. He states: "God, by his essence, is not only free in his self-possession and self-disposition, but, precisely because of this, he is also free to dispose of his being in the sense of a self-donation: as Father, to communicate divinity to the Son, as Father and Son to share the same divinity with the Spirit"[339] . Self-possession in the divine persons is then understood as self-giving within their own divine reality. But this must be understood as something eternal and always happening. The Father has always been himself *in* his self-giving and *with* his self-giving. And this can be conjectured as his

eternal happiness: the gift of himself. In the Father there is an identity between having and detachment. The same must be said of the other divine persons, starting, of course, from the characteristics proper to each person. Now, for this to take place, it is necessary that, in this event of the hypostases, in the same absolute freedom there be available "infinite spaces of freedom" for the other persons to subsist there. Indeed, "the Father's act of self-giving demands its own space of freedom"[340] , and so also the three persons who welcome one another give and demand spaces of freedom where they allow one another to be. And all this is infinite and eternal, as well as mysterious and ineffable. Thus, even though we must always reckon that in God everything is given with a "greater dissimilarity," one can still see "'the absolutely positive of difference' in absolute being, which means that the divine nature is not possessed in common by the hypostases as an untouchable treasure," but to be given and shared in the freedom to let the other be distinct[341] . And it is the very essence of God that is eternally donated. With all this it is now clear why finite freedom can really be realized in infinite freedom and why nowhere else could it do so. For God "is accustomed" to let the other be different. There is "no danger of finite freedom, which by itself is not capable of full realization," becoming alienated in the infinite because the essence of the infinite is to give space, to give life, and to let the other be in difference[342] . With this we can see why only the Trinitarian revelation has been able to resolve the inscrutable paradox of the existence of a finite reality alongside the infinite without destroying either of them.

Ways for finite versus infinite freedom to exist.

The Trinitarian doctrine has allowed Balthasar to specify the theological meaning of infinite freedom. He must then face "the question considered the most difficult" of philosophy: "*why* is there, next to the absolute being, also another relative and finite being, and *how, in the* end, can there be such a being?"[343] . Balthasar answers with two arguments: the act of creation as a Trinitarian "reflection" and the creation "in" the Son.

The first argument affirms that the "process" or act of creation, if we understand it from the Trinitarian reality in the sense that it reflects in

a creatural way what happens eternally in the Trinity, allows us to understand how finite freedom can be given together with infinite freedom. Concretely, it is based on the fact that in the Trinity being *different*, that is, that the other is *not* me, is definitely something positive:

> If in God, because of the opposition of the persons, the *no* (the Son is not the Father, etc.) has an infinite positive meaning.) has an infinite positive sense; if, moreover, the "not clinging" to his own divine being, but lavishing it (also the Spirit gives himself to the love of the Father and the Son, love which is himself), belongs to the absolute positivity of the divine life, then the passage from infinite freedom to the creation of finite freedoms (with all that these presuppose and require) need not be the "absolute paradox" of thought .[344]

This means that, keeping all the distance between the Trinitarian eternity and the act of creation - because between creature and God there is always a greater dissimilarity - yet, being always the same and only God, the freedom that decides the creation is then *the same* freedom that eternally wills the generation of the Son and with the Son the procession of the Spirit. Therefore, that freedom, just as it "lets be" the Son and the Spirit, also "lets be" creation with its own finite freedom, because it has justly willed it to exist as such. And the second argument recognizes that if creation has been realized "in Christ" (Col 1:15-20 and Eph 1:3-14), then the world must be able to subsist - with its finite freedom essentially belonging to itself - in the Son. Indeed, he affirms: "if the Son is the eternal Word of the Father, then the world has been created entirely by this Word (Jn 1:3), not only as an instrument, but as the archetype and, in this way, the goal of the world"[345] . Thus, since the world, by an act of the eternal freedom of the Father, is founded on the Son, it can exist with all its essential characteristics, which God himself has given it and which subsist through and in the Son. These are the two "theological" reasons that justify the existence of a finite freedom: it is willed and sustained by the same infinite freedom, which is Trinitarian.

From the above, two classic questions of creation theology that are relevant to our topic and that have already been answered in part can be resolved: where is there a possible "place" for the world to exist, and what is or why is this the world that God has decided to create?

To wonder about the place where the world exists is to reflect on

how something beyond God can exist, if God is everything. It is another way of entering into our own theme: Does creation add something to God? This is a problem that philosophy has not been able to solve either, and it only has a Trinitarian answer as we have just seen. Indeed, although here we can only speak in images, the processions within the Trinity indicate to us the place where the world can fit, without destroying either the transcendence or the perfection of God. The spaces of intradivine freedom-which we have just mentioned-are the place where a created world can exist. We have seen that in the Trinity the Father lets the Son be, and so the other persons let the others be. This is a positive thing in the Trinity, the fruit of God's richness and not of his indigence, since his essence is to give himself and, therefore, to let the other be. It is not a withdrawal, but a positive way of loving, allowing to be. So God does not need to withdraw to any pretended place to make room for the world because his essence is to make room for the Other. The possible space for the world - and all that God would have wished to create - is from all eternity in the Son. Thus, the analogy between God and creature (*analogia entis*) extends to the very act of creation in the sense that the intradivine "no" (the Father is *not* the Son and lets the Son be) is the deepest foundation of the creatural "no" (the created is *not* God, but God allows and lets it be). The infinite distance between God and creature is affirmed in the infinite distance and unity between God (Father) and God (Son)[346] . As analogical - and from images - as this reflection may be, it essentially expresses the possible foundation of creation, which is certainly Trinitarian.

The second question is also directly related to our theme: to ask why God made this world and not another is to ask about the limitations of this world, and therefore also about the frailties of finite freedom. Could not the freedom have been better endowed? Faced with this question, the first thing Balthasar does is to denounce its fallacious aspects. Indeed, two possible dangers can be hidden in this question, although contrary to each other. On the one hand, to think that in the face of the multiple possibilities that God has to create, he resolves with arbitrariness, as if he were choosing one at random among many

other equal ones; and, on the other hand, on the contrary, to think that God, in creating, would have had the need to create this world-as it is-because that would now imply a need for creation as such and also for the incarnation of God. Indeed, this topic has captured the imagination of many generations with answers that are not always correct. For Balthasar, the answer is simple: if we move away from the two extremes indicated, then "nothing should stand in the way of proclaiming this world willed by God as the best, *because it* has been chosen by God, in his absolute freedom, as the most adequate reproduction of the Idea of the freely obedient Son"[347] . Indeed, the universe has been created in the Son and we have all been chosen in him (Eph 1:4-15). This means that he is the exemplary, final and efficient cause of the world. But this is not deduced from philosophy, but from the place of the Son in the Trinity. The Son is the one who receives his whole being from the Father and exists from the Father and, at the same time, responds together with the Father by giving his whole being in the procession of the Spirit. For this very reason, if there is a world, it must be an image of the Son. Indeed, the Son, "because he is God, is infinite and eternal freedom; because he is the Son of the Father, he is this freedom in the *tropos* [= mode] of availability, receptivity, obedience, and, in them, of correspondence, that is, of being word, image and expression". For this reason Balthasar will affirm that the Son of God made man is "the concrete *analogia entis*," because in him is given that relationship of likeness and dissimilarity, union and distance, between God and the creature[348] . And what he is in the Trinity he can assume analogically as man. And if this world was created in the Son, then this world is "the best possible" (not in Leibniz's sense) simply because it was so planned and created. In this way, all the lucubrations about possible worlds are completely useless. Theologically, what counts is the fact that everything was created in the Son and that every person finds in the Son his own founding idea, his uniqueness and his finality; in such a way that every self-possession is foreseen in the Son, and in the Son everyone comes into contact with all reality. All other speculation is useless and misguided.

Latency and accompaniment of God

The third issue that interests Balthasar here is what has "happened" in God so that a true finite freedom can exist. If in fact there exists - as has been theologically proven - a finite freedom created by God, then necessarily - or at least apparently - something like a kind of opposition or limitation to divine freedom has arisen. Indeed, every creature to which is given an essence -which as such is not divine-, has its own operative space, the more autonomous the more perfect and closer to God that essence is, the more autonomous it is. Hence Balthasar's significant deduction: God being the creator of all finite freedom, this

> can only exist as a participation of infinite freedom, because of its immanence in it and because of the transcendence of the latter over it, to the point that, at the moment of its realization, it can only act with and in infinite freedom [...].However, this space of freedom is achieved by creatures only in the case that the God who leaves them in freedom withdraws in a certain latency*, that* the God, who cannot be absent from any place, adopts a certain incognito mood opening, not only in appearance but in reality, numerous ways to freedom .[349]

This is very important in Balthasar's theology because it has to do with the kenosis of God with respect to the creature, an image of the intra-Trinitarian kenosis of which we have spoken (the divine persons leave "space" for one another). Here, *latency* (*Latenz*) means that God leaves space for the creature to practice its freedom, as in the parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30). In that parable, each one of the workers received something from his master (God), but then he had to work it autonomously, with his own initiative, while the master was on a journey. From there arises (philosophically and theologically) the *autexousia:* God allows finite freedom to act from its self-possession and from the vocation-mission given, precisely because that is what it has been created for. From the very creation of the world, God has always been both present and hidden. Present through his revelation, but at the same time hidden because his knowledge can never be exhausted. That makes him recognizable, but also unrecognizable. That is what is meant by the *latency* of God in creation. Indeed, "the latency of God with respect to finite freedom, which is not guaranteed any fixed indicator, but only simple hints about the direction to

follow, is the *cause of the profound possibility of error in the framework of* finite *reality*"[350] . But at the same time, it is the possibility of its own fuller realization if, starting from the openness to that latent God, it develops its own finite freedom in the infinite that opens to it manifestly-occultatively. God's latency is not indigence, but the manifestation of his immense love, since it is what allows the existence of a finite freedom and is at the basis of the immense love expressed in the fact that God is *interior intimo meo.* It is the condition of possibility of the existence of a finite freedom. Thus, it is not abandonment of the creature, but permanent and intimate accompaniment and call.

Now, since latency means accompaniment, but the one who is latent and accompanies is God, who is absolute and *transcendent,* this obliges us to properly understand three aspects of this same accompaniment, which are part of the normal vocabulary of Christian doctrine: (1) what is (or how to understand the meaning of) God's "plan" for each human being; (2) what happens if someone does not follow God's "plan" or "will"; (3) and how "divine Providence" acts. To understand these three arguments well, we must once again beware of "mythological-ingenuous" thinking and enter into more refined thinking, both theologically and philosophically.

With respect to God's "plan" for each human being (or what has been understood as God's "will" for each person), first of all it must be remembered that this "accompaniment [latent] is unitary and immutable because it is omnicomprehensive"[351] . This means that whatever is thought with respect to a given plan (or will) of God for each person must be thought of in a unitary and universal way: for all and as a totality. It must be affirmed definitively that there is but one and only one plan-terrestrial and eschatological-according to the eternal presence of God in the whole world. And in this plan is included, from the beginning, every response of God to every possible word of finite freedom. In other words, God does not improvise at every moment, but neither is everything historically determined "from before", but - in a very mysterious way for us - everything is "reduced to" and everything is "expanded in" the only plan, which is *Jesus*

Christ, who is in everything and embraces everything. By this is meant that it is not that for each person there is something like a particular project (a kind of detailed "will" of God), concrete, detailed, and thus there are millions of pre-determined projects in which, because of the multiple negative responses of finite freedoms, God would have to improvise every day hundreds of new responses according to the performance of each freedom; rather, in a much more transcendent - and non-human-mythological - way, it must be understood as a totality in Christ, as a living in Christ, as a constant event of self-possession, on the way to the configuration - unique and personal - in Christ. This is the only and authentic "will" of God for each person. Early Christianity understood very well that the world was under the Trinitarian and soteriological plan of God in Christ; and with good reason it conceived it from a certain similarity with the Stoic *logos*. "In this sense, in the face of an unforeseen human situation, God always has the capacity to carry out a new work, without the need to make a new decision"[352] . This can be so only because "the" plan is precisely *the Son* of God alive, acting and present in the world and in whom everything subsists and from whom everything comes. It is not a question here of speaking - in a human way - of the mutability or immutability of God. The subject does not have to do with that. It is rather about how this transcendent God, precisely because he is Trinitarian, can act in the world through "his hands", the Son and the Spirit (Irenaeus). The classic text of Ex 3:14: "I am who I am"-which does not need to be stripped of its philosophical cover, but which in reality means "I am who I will be," "I will be in every new present and actual situation"-is referring precisely, not to a philosophical immutability, but to the irrevocability of his plan for the human being-that is what is immutable-which obviously rests on the eternal fidelity and truthfulness of God with respect to himself. In the end, God's plan is supreme and irrevocable, but this does not mean denying time and space, but rather overcoming them insofar as they are expressions that find their fullness in the life of God. For this reason, at times it can give the impression that God is very unstable in his judgments and plans, just as at other times he can give the opposite

impression, of being imperturbable, because in his inscrutable and ever greater love and from his transcendence he is constantly accompanying the historical human being in the tension of a plan that is both personal and universal. In this plan, time and space are transcended in a unique design *in the Son*, in which we all participate , but which develops historically starting from our finite freedom. This is the immense *mystery* of the human being.

Now, concretely - the second question - what happens when a person does not respond to God, does not accept "his plan", does not accept "his will"? This has just been answered in essence. Here it only needs to be made explicit. What is determined is *surpassed* - it is accepted and reconsidered in a new way - in the unlimited and eternal of the Son, without there being "changes" either in God or in his "plan". Indeed, "God's idea of the world, in conformity with its original unity in the exemplarity of the Son, is both infinite and *determined.* Infinite, because it is God himself who reveals himself in the Son"[353] . But at the same time determined, because it is realized through the *economy,* which is expressed through concrete commandments and propositions, which are the temporal and historical expression of the eternal will of God in each given situation. That is to say, for Balthasar, there is a constant tension between the concrete form in which each created being seeks to fulfill the plan, and its unitary, global and transcendent totality in God. Here again we are dealing with a unitary plan that is only understood in Christ.

With the above elements, the third aspect can now be properly addressed. It is a matter of understanding more adequately what is normally called divine *Providence, insofar* as it is that commitment of God, prior to any merit of ours, to lead us to this conformation with his Son. Providence is not then a permanent intervention of God in the world, as if God were just another actor in the world. If one examines the Bible carefully, there Providence always implies a personal event of a Christological character, that is to say, there Providence means a foreknowledge or pre-determination to be conformed to the image of his Son. Thus, Providence, insofar as "seeing in advance" (*pro-videre*), is knowing in advance the archetype to which the human being must

resemble. But this archetype is not something generic, nor is it an objective and fixed plan - like a plan of action - but much more profoundly it is simply the concrete "You" of the Father - the Son - in such a way that Providence is the accompaniment for us to become one in the Son and, furthermore, for us to accept the call to have each one a singular and unrepeatable name provided by the Father. Humanity is not a group, but there is an unrepeatable singularity in each one thanks to the Spirit that rests in the heart of each one. Therefore Providence is not an external plan, but the establishment of a personal and unique relationship (= a proper name) with the Father, in the Son and to make us one in the Son, where the concrete historical path to reach it is not relevant and will depend on the freedom of each person.

Finite freedom on the way to infinite freedom

Having understood what is meant by finite freedom and infinite freedom and how their mutual relationship is possible, Balthasar now explains the salvific significance of for the human being. In reality, the above was only the foundation for explaining what -soteriologically- is truly important for us: how finite freedom is oriented and can advance and develop to live within infinite freedom, which is its innermost vocation. Balthasar poses this question as follows:

> Finite freedom, it has already been seen, cannot be made possible except through infinite freedom and, consequently, neither can it be realized as finite freedom except in infinite freedom. By virtue of its finitude, it has a whence-where and a whither-where, whereby it is essentially oriented toward and centered on a path. It has in infinite freedom its center and its orientation, which do not come to it from outside but are inscribed within it .[354]

With this, Balthasar affirms that this structural orientation of finite freedom towards the infinite -which we can call his "vocation"- is inscribed in such a way in every human being that he can only fulfill himself in the fulfillment of this call or destiny inserted in his very essence[355] . From there, Balthasar describes the four fundamental "acts" that are necessary for every human person to be able to carry out, in an adequate way, his relationship with God, and with that, to fulfill and develop that vocation inherent in the creation/redemption of the human being. The first two are basic anthropological attitudes

with theological roots: the recognition of oneself as a gift, and the reception of God's gift as grace. The other two are existential acts, fruits of the gift received: the possibility of prayer and rebirth in Christ. Basically, they are four aspects that embrace the whole of human existence and show how, in the concrete of everyday life, the relationship between finite freedom and infinite freedom develops, which brings to fullness the human being called to fulfill himself in infinite and absolute freedom .[356]

Recognizing oneself as a gift

We have already mentioned that every human being who experiences himself as existing, experiences himself at the same time as existing without any previous merit of his own, that is, he realizes that his personal existence is a gift that he has received gratuitously and that must be accepted with gratitude. In Balthasar's words: "When the awareness of one's own being and of being free is awakened, there automatically arises a spontaneous and unreserved yes to the donated reality. The one who pronounces this yes, knows himself to be empowered from somewhere, gifted with the yes of being. In reality, to exist is something precious"[357] . This is the most beautiful experience one can have: to be amazed that one exists, because certainly to exist is much better than not to exist. In fact, this is the wonder with which all philosophy begins: the wonder that there are objects - minds -, the wonder that there is being, which exists abundantly. It is the amazement that there is so much *gift,* because everything is "given." But along with that, a second experience takes place, which can be described as follows: I exist, but there are also many others like me - humans - who have awakened me to consciousness and who help me in my development, by looking at me as a *you.* However, then, through all the human you's, an absolute you begins to subtly appear to me, since no relative you can sustain itself. Nevertheless, this remains only as a yearning, a question or a meaninglessness, as long as the Trinitarian revelation that definitively resolves this aspiration/intuition does not occur.

Indeed, Jesus and the Spirit are the ones who have revealed to us that the absolute wonder of God is that he is not a solitary being, but

a Father. And this means that God, as Father, is the eternal source that perpetually generates the Son, the eternal *Thou* of the Father. Well then, "only from this miracle, finite freedom given to itself, can know itself to be challenged as a you and qualify itself as an I before the one who enables it to give itself". Finite freedom knows itself to be challenged as a you, but at the same time it can also *challenge* God as a you - infinite freedom - because in the Son we are all a personal, permanent and unique you for the Father[358] . We are a you that does not disappear, nor does it change, nor is it relative, since it is sustained by the eternal reality of the Father, who relates to us in the eternal Son. This is a great event because God is not just another entity among other entities, but is nothing less than the *Not-Other,* immensely transcendent. And that Absolute and Transcendent treats me as you. In this way, I can now understand that I, through the Son, am a *good,* affirmed absolutely by him. "Only when I experience that I represent for God a good and a you, can I fully entrust myself to the gift of being and freedom given to me and empower myself as the one who has really been empowered from all eternity." Hence every creature can exist and develop freely in that "metaphysical-theological place" which is the difference between the Father and the Son in the unity of the divine nature[359] , because there it is a you willed and allowed to be by the Father in the Son.

Reception of God's gift as grace

Having recognized one's own existence and finite freedom as a gift of God, which can subsist and grow because it is sustained as a beloved Thou in the Son-the Thou of the Father-Balthasar now seeks to understand and expose precisely how that *nexus* between finite and infinite freedom, which we call *grace,* comes about. It is she who allows the relationship between the freedoms, given the tremendous dissimilarity between the two. This is a very delicate and mysterious subject, which is why it must be studied carefully and in faith. The explanation presupposes an understanding of two things: (1) the meaning of autonomy itself, insofar as it is given; and (2) the form of presence of the giver, as grace, in the same autonomy that is given. With this, it will be possible to understand the two poles of grace (or

of the nexus), without suppressing either of them. With respect to the first point, it is clear that, although finite freedom has been created and given by God and is oriented toward infinite freedom, it does not for that reason cease to be autonomous and given to its own responsibility. But this autonomy cannot be thought of either as a space into which no one can enter (not even God as eternal law), or as inseparable from infinite freedom, that is, absorbed by it in its freedom. The authentic way of understanding this autonomy presupposes two fundamental conceptions. The first is to understand the free gift of existence - with the freedom that corresponds to it - not as if it were an act already concluded once and for all - as a finite act - but rather as a *permanent* act. This has traditionally been called "continuous creation" or "conservation in being". There, at every moment, alongside the permanent gift of existence, the giver of existence is offering himself - in that very act. In other words, the presence of the donor belongs to the very essence of the donated existence. This is so not only because of the origin of the gift (God), but also because of the purpose of that gift, which is to welcome the offer of self-transcendence of finite freedom within the infinite[360] . And the second is that the fact that finite freedom recognizes itself as a gift received does not make it a slave of the one who has given it the gift, since in that same recognition there is also the awareness that it owes it precisely its autonomy, which it can realize only starting from and within infinite freedom, "essentially present in the gift"[361] . Finite freedom, then, is always faced with the paradox that it can neither monopolize nor dominate infinite freedom, but neither can it eliminate it, because at every moment it is confronted with its character as a gift of its own autonomy. Its autonomy has been given to it as such.

Having clarified what the autonomy of finite freedom really means, Balthasar can now turn to this second point and explain what is meant by grace. First, it is the presence of the giver (God) in the gift (human existence), and the self-opening of infinite freedom, that allows finite freedom to open itself toward transcendence. Indeed, to exist in openness and thanksgiving towards infinite freedom is the fruit of

grace, that is, of the presence of the giver in the gift. Now, since God is that which wills, "the ontological being of God is identified with his being of gift and, therefore, with his love"[362] ; then the presence of the giver in the gift is the grace offered by God, which can very well be expressed as the love of God, as the being of God that offers itself. Therefore, since the being of God is identified with his quality of gift and love, and since the total gift of the creature to the will of God makes that same creature - with and in the Son - be reborn from the bosom of the Father; then the total non-resistance and openness of finite freedom toward the infinite is both the letting oneself be penetrated by the Holy Spirit - as the absolute gift of God - and the encounter with the transcendence of the creature toward God. Thus, infinite freedom cannot not be in the finite -albeit in a latent way-, but its presence is so that finite freedom -from its autonomy- can make its most adequate decisions. It can understand that the immanence and latency of God in itself -insofar as grace- is not something alien to itself, because God cannot be alien to anything insofar as he is transcendent and not just another "other" in creation[363] . This is the immense mystery and the sublime paradox of God's grace: it is an undeserved gift of God, but at the same time, the human being needs it and it does not act as something alien to the human being himself.

The possibility of prayer

Having recognized that we are a gift and that we are also in possession of that gift which is God himself, Balthasar now explains the two permanent existential acts that are the consequence and fruit of this gift received. The first of these is prayer, of which he explains its true meaning from a purely theological perspective. This is not a treatise on spirituality, but simply a theological justification of both the fact of prayer and its necessity. It is well known that prayer is always adoration and invocation at the same time. But it can be misunderstood in three ways: if we think of God in a naively anthropomorphic way, "in the manner of a king" who listens to "the petitions of his vassals"[364] ; or, from the critique that philosophy makes of this same naivety, understanding prayer as an interior monologue that produces a subjective harmony in the praying person;

or simply by making prayer disappear -as such- when reality is conceived as an identity between God and creature, since in that case the interlocutor is man himself (that is why in idealism there is no prayer). However, Christian prayer is nothing like all that. For Balthasar, the model can only be Trinitarian, since Jesus in his relationship with the Father in the Spirit is the only model of Christian prayer. If we look then at the prayer of Jesus, it has two fundamental characteristics: it is the search for a perfect availability to the will of the Father; and it possesses the certainty that the Father always listens to him. Both things harmonize in Jesus because his earthly obedience is an expression of his eternal filiation. In such a way that the whole life of Jesus is a search for realization, identification and development of his filial adhesion to the Trinitarian design of salvation, where his surrender to the Father coincides with his development as Son. But the essential point to understand this sense of prayer in Jesus -and in every Christian- is that, on the one hand, Jesus is not under any "divine *fatum* that is realized in an impersonal and necessary way in his destiny" and, on the other hand, at every moment he asks his Father to be able to identify himself with his will[365] . In other words, it is a free and internal search to identify himself with the will of the Father, which does not come to him externally, but is born of his filial condition. In this way it is clear what the Christian's way of praying is: it is to identify freely with the Son's way of feeling and thinking in his total obedience to the Father. It is to become one with the Son through the work of the Holy Spirit. In this way, whoever asks for something "in the Son", that is, in his Spirit and in his following, will always be heard, since that request has been made and will be fulfilled mysteriously "in" the Son in whom we are *one with him*.

Allowing oneself to be conformed in Christ

This is the second existential act, fruit of the gift received from God. If we start from the fact already mentioned that finite freedom can only be realized within infinite freedom, because the Son is its Archetype, who contains in himself all the singular ideas of all creatures and because God has for each creature a determined will; then the ultimate criterion of measure - located beyond its finiteness -

and which allows finite freedom to reach that finality and will of God, will always be the Son made man, through his Body which is the Church. In fact, the Father in his heart generates the Word and this Word speaks, through the mediation of the Church, in the hearts of the faithful. This is what is called "being born of God". For to allow oneself to be conformed to Christ is to allow oneself to be elaborated as a member of his body and as a singular believing member of the Church[366] . The Church is the place and the mediation so that finite freedom can find its maximum unfolding and transcendence towards infinite freedom. With this Balthasar has also highlighted the communitarian and ecclesiological aspect of the subject, so that it does not give the impression that it is only a question of an individual-God relationship. Each human being develops only *with* and *thanks to* his brothers and sisters. This is always the Trinitarian model.

Chosen and sent in Christ

The last question related to this theme, although Balthasar deals with it a little later in *Theodramatics,* is the mode of the inclusion of finite freedom in Christ: he defines it as a choice and mission. This theme will be treated at length in *Theodramatics* III, in the context of Christology and the response of the Church (and Mary), that is, in the context of the *Theological Characters*. Therefore, here we will only present its justification and its meaning, and only in relation to our theme. Balthasar performs three steps, which explain theologically why we must understand inclusion in Christ as a choice and mission.

In the first place, if finite freedom must unfold *in Christ* in order to transcend itself to infinite freedom, then in that Christ the relationship between finite and infinite freedom must be given in fullness. With that one immediately sees "the difficulty of the whole doctrine about the divine-human person of Christ: in it the freedom of the 'descent' must be reconciled with the lack of freedom proper to that fallen state, the intuitive knowledge of the Father with the concealment of an exemplary 'faith'"[367] . Thus, with the incarnation, the unity between the definitive Word of God for the world and a finite human life, through which this definitive Word is pronounced, has been realized

in Christ. Hence, in Christ the relationship between created (human) and uncreated (divine) freedom, which is the maximum possibility and the broadest framework in which both freedoms can coexist, is carried out *hypostatically,* that is, in his person and in a supreme way. Balthasar recalls this, affirming that God's absolute freedom can only be infinite and thus be essentially liberating; but at the same time,

> must manifest itself as something finite to the finite creature, since in its destiny it appears to the creature that God has willed to be finite. But this finite *appearance* of the infinite will is conditioned by the finite constitution and the finite historical situation of the creature, while it tends by its very essence to the limitless openness of its freedom. [...] The true immanence of the infinite in the finite being necessarily carries with it that quality of the infinite precisely where it becomes immanent for this determinate and finite being: in order to be *for* it and in *its* situation the indication and accompaniment for advancing from the finite to the infinite .[368]

This is the basic law of every relationship of God with the creature: the infinite is inscribed in the finite and appears as finite (since it is inscribed precisely in the finite); but there, from the finite, it opens itself as infinite, so that the finite (which is only fulfilled in the infinite) can accept this openness of the infinite (even though it has manifested itself as finite). And this basic law of God's relationship with the creature has been fulfilled par excellence in Christ. There the infinite - the Word - has become finite - in Jesus - but in him the infinite Word of God is revealed - albeit in a human way - so that the human being - who needs God - can open himself to the Word that calls him. Therefore, the human being is fully fulfilled only in Christ. And without the explicit opening of the divine space in Christ, the human person would simply not have been able to realize his transcendence.

But now, in the second place, how can we understand this inclusion as "inclusion"? For it is clear that biologically it is not possible to consider all of humanity as a unity in Christ:

> At first, the inclusion of the characters of the drama in Christ means no more than this: in Christ, God has opened that personal space of freedom within which the concrete characters (individual or collective) receive their definitive face, mission or human "role", which are given to each one to interpret in an adequate or inadequate way .[369]

Indeed, Christ is the alpha and the omega, and this means that all creation has not been created in a vacuum, but has been projected for

Christ. And this is always a loving grace, which has been freely offered but which must also be freely accepted. This expresses the dramatic nature of human life: although by the constitution of his nature the human being is oriented towards Christ, the transition of man to incorporation into Christ must be a completely free and personal decision of each created freedom. As Balthasar affirms: "No one becomes against his will a loving child of the heavenly Father. Man can freely choose which freedom he prefers: that of a pure origin from himself [... enjoying his autonomy alone]; or that of the attitude of continuous gratitude for one's own being directed to absolute freedom, which has already from time immemorial opened to the finite the space in which it can realize itself: *in* Christōi"[370] . *Inclusion,* then, simply means a positive response to the Christological destiny that each person possesses.

Now, in the third place, if we have been created in Christ, but each one must accept this invitation freely, then this action of God in the Son can be called *election* and *mission,* where both things form a unique reality with two aspects. Balthasar affirms: "the election, vocation, mission coming from God are, if they are affirmed and assumed, the supreme possibility for man to acquire his personality and become master of his own foundation and his own idea, which otherwise would escape him"[371] . The choice and mission are thus transformed into a constitutive part of every person who is called in a certain fraction of the time of his existence. Balthasar describes this constitutive element of the person from the biblical characteristics of the multiple calls found there. He explains, for example, that the call is surprising, that the person called may be unfit for the mission, and certainly, that the call is not expected and that many times the assignments are rather difficult. However, the person called may look back and discover that he, within the divine Providence, had been chosen from the womb and was being prepared throughout his life. On the other hand, the call can only come from God, albeit through human instruments. And since many calls go unanswered, this is telling us that "'election' does not mean the eternal election of God by grace, but the efficacious character of the interpellation in the

freedom of the call"[372] . In the history of a human life, the freedom - at any moment - to accept or not to accept the call speaks of the possibility of rejection, and for this very reason it also speaks of the possibility of reprobation. This rejection can only be a profound threat to the person, but it in no way annihilates the creature, although it disfigures its face[373] . From all this it follows that the human being has been called and destined by God, and therefore, he must transfer himself with his personal center to what is given to him with the call. And being with his new "name" at the service of the mission, "he grows in that which most properly constitutes him in his personality, thanks to the fact that he forgets his private subjectivity and enters into his function"[374] . But this is a whole process, with which we understand the temporal and historical separation that can exist between call and mission. It is necessary to prepare oneself, to become conscious, to deepen, etc. Everything requires vital time. Finally, it is necessary to insist that "election, vocation and mission are always, if considered theologically, pure grace"[375] . God chooses the despicable of this world because the human being tends to believe that the call responds to his own merits. Consequently, since the call will always mean entering into the history of salvation at the service of the cause of God in Christ, this implies working so that the non-identity becomes the most similar identity possible and "finding in this mission one's own identity both on a personal and social level"[376] . With all this, Balthasar demonstrates the clearly historical character of this inclusion in Christ. It is not something abstract, nor simply future, nor something only intimate, nor merely "spiritual", but on the contrary, it is a personal vocation, with communitarian roots and at the service of society. It involves the whole person, in the entire development of his or her history, where that same vocation ends up qualifying the true identity of the person called.

Thus Balthasar not only affirms the purely Christological character of the relationship between freedoms, but also manifests its dialogical character. Both themes are important and he will treat them extensively in the *Theodramatic,* and we will have the opportunity to review them in the following chapters.

IV. Foundations for a Christological Theology of History

The theology of history - like so much of the content of the *Trilogy* - is a theme that Balthasar had already dealt with at some length in the past. We find it both in *Theology of History* and in *The Whole in the Fragment* and, in a more synthetic way, in *Love Alone is Worthy of Faith*[377] . However, his intention in those texts was not to develop a complete theology of history, but only "the linking of Christ, in his Christological temporality, with the general time of human history"[378] . This same argument appears in the *Trilogy,* although a little more dispersed, and fundamentally in the context of Christ's action in the drama. We find it especially in *Teodramática* IV and some other elements in volumes III and V of the second part of the *Trilogy*. As is logical in a work of synthesis, he was not able to treat in detail many of the aspects involved in the subject, as he did in the works just mentioned, but he did succeed in exposing his most nuclear thought on the subject, which is the Christological character that every theology of history must possess. On the other hand, it is a theme that in *Theodramatica* is intimately linked to the eschatological character of Christ's action in the drama itself and to the present apocalyptic moment, with a clearly Trinitarian substratum[379] . Therefore, this theme must be studied bearing in mind what we have said above about his Trinitarian doctrine[380] and the elements of eschatology characteristic of Balthasar[381] . We will develop the chapter in two moments. In the first two sections we will present some presuppositions and theological elements that are indispensable for understanding God's action in history, and then we will see some of the characteristics of this history marked by the dramatic and eschatological presence of Jesus Christ. We will conclude with some critical reflections on a topic that has raised questions about certain postulates of Balthasar .[382]

Trinitarian presuppositions for God's action in history

Starting from the basic affirmation that "in a theodramatic God cannot remain at the margin of the representation, but must be at the center of it"[383] , Balthasar, at the end of the volumes that speak of theological characters (*Theodramatics* II and III), makes a reflection on the Trinitarian God. There he justifies and gives the reasons why God *can* act as a "character" in the human drama, that is, in its history, without ceasing to be transcendent and without destroying history in its freedom and unpredictability. In these pages we can discover four important reasons (they can also be understood as criteria) that serve as a condition of possibility for a Christological theology of history.

1. The first reason - basic and fundamental - is necessarily the very Trinitarian condition of God[384] . Indeed, God can very well appear on the world scene, and in fact "has entered the scene" through Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of the Father, who fully possesses the Holy Spirit of God. Only on the basis of this Trinitarian reality of God, known precisely through God's own self-manifestation and action in history, can God's true action in the drama take place, without God ceasing to be transcendent to this human history, nor losing his sovereign character superior to all possible understanding. Indeed, when God reveals himself in his Word made flesh, the Father presents himself in it "as the point of reference from which [the Son] comes, from which he speaks and works, and to which he orients himself and to which he returns"[385] . Thus the Father does not disappear in the Son, since the Son is his interpretation. But at the same time he maintains his transcendent character and absolute mystery-as a hidden God-because he reveals himself always and only *in* the Son. Consequently, his own Trinitarian reality allows God to act *historically* without ceasing to be transcendent, and at the same time, in the *incarnation* of the Son, it makes it possible for revelation to be both historical and universal, since "the interpretation of God, given in Christ..., is accessible to anyone, since it is given in the Son, is accessible to everyone, since it has been produced in the *medium* of human nature common to all, to the point that everyone comes to possess it"[386] , and furthermore, in order to welcome it, the Holy Spirit

has been poured into the hearts of all so as to awaken faith in this ever greater mystery.

2. The second reason - which is at the same time a necessary presupposition - is the following: God always *acts* in history *as God* (and it is a condition that he does so). This distinctive form of God's action in history is rooted in and made possible by the Trinitarian condition of God and is sustained by the basic fact that the economic Trinity is a manifestation of the immanent Trinity. But for this it is important to note - as we have already mentioned when we spoke of the Trinity - that, in Balthasar's thought, this immanent Trinity can in no way be "reduced" to the economic Trinity - that is to say that it is only a trinity in view of the economy. This is central for Balthasar because only as an *eternally immanent* Trinity - and not only in view of creation - can God be love *in himself*, in his eternal reality and prior to creation; and not only because he would become "'love' by having the world as his 'you' and his 'partner'". God is "already in himself and above the world 'love'"[387] . Only under this condition can God act "personally" in the drama -involving himself with freedom and love- and really be God himself -the Sempiternal- the one who acts, without ceasing for that reason to be authentically the transcendent God. That is to say, if God is love before creation - and this means that there is an eternal Thou in God, that is, the Son - he can relate to the world - in that Son - as a created Thou, and thus become involved in the drama.

3. From this arises the third reason (or presupposition): the necessity (and the fact) that the *three* Trinitarian persons be involved in the drama so that we can speak of a true presence of God in it. And we have said that this was possible precisely because God is Trinity. Indeed, the Father, "being the one who sends the Son and the Spirit remains apparently above the representation," nevertheless, he truly acts in them and engages himself with the greatest depth that it is possible to think of[388] . Thus, the Son is not only the Word and manifestation of the Father, but fulfills *his* mission, and incarnate, makes him present to him as unconditional love for all human beings. Moreover, filled with the Holy Spirit and acting with the power of the

Spirit, that same Spirit transmits to him the will of his Father, and through that Spirit the Son acts with the power of God. And that is the Spirit that the Risen One poured out on the world after his Passover. All the actions of the Son, and then of the Spirit, are understood as missions *of the* Father and always in relation *to the* Father. Consequently, we can affirm that his Trinitarian condition is what allows God to be *above* the drama, but at the same time to be *in* the drama of history.

4. The last reason: "the Trinitarian God does not appear beside other figures on the stage of the world, but in them"[389] , precisely because God is the "Totally Other" and at the same time the "Not-Other"; and as we said, because he always acts *as God*. Otherwise we would be thinking in a mythological way, because "the Persons of God will never appear individually on the scene as such, that is, as divine"[390] . Thus, the Word of God appears only through the human nature of Jesus Christ, and with his human manner and personality he has addressed the Father and manifested the Father to us. Likewise, the Holy Spirit reveals himself only by acting through charisms poured out on persons and dwelling in the heart of the Church and of human beings. And both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, acting through the human, manifest and communicate the Father. Now, "such a transfiguration of the created by the divine is possible only because the created as such, in its pure non-God-being, is an image of God, which even in sin is never totally destroyed"[391] . Created reality possesses an indelible Trinitarian imprint, even if dissimilarity always predominates. However, this imprint is what allows God to act *as God* through human beings, because the likeness - however precarious it may be - allows God to communicate authentically, thanks to the analogy of being. And this also reveals something else to us: if God has this free concern for the world that makes him reveal himself, then in God there is a love for the world that cannot be unforeseen. It must be eternal, that is, from the very moment of creation, and therefore creation is also due to God's love. And this supposes - once again - that in God there is a love prior to creation, that is, that God is love, that is, Trinity.

Consequently, it is the Trinitarian identity that allows God to become involved in the human drama, because he himself has created this scenario, together with its drama, and takes responsibility for it. In Balthasar's words:

> The Christian God, who in his identity is capable of being the One, the Other and the Unifier, is already formally the most dramatic of all gods. The moment he places outside himself a world and assumes responsibility for it, it is clear that this phenomenon, in conformity with its prototype, cannot in turn be anything but dramatic in an eminent sense .[392]

We have already said that the existence of the "other" (= the Son) *in* God is what makes possible the creation of a finite "other" *outside of* God. But at the same time, the creation of a world - out of love - implies for God a permanent concern and responsibility for this created world, which justifies God's involvement in the drama of this creation, that is, in the action of the freedoms of human beings among themselves and with God. But he will always be involved as God and in the manner of a transcendent God, that is to say, he will do so through the human actors themselves. This allows God to act really *in* history, but not mythologically. Balthasar exemplifies this by using the metaphor of the theater, affirming that in the triad of author, actor and director we see well represented the way God acts in history[393] : the Father is the author of the play, but he himself is not the actor. The actor is the Son, who realizes and carries out what the Father has planned. But as an archetype, all the other actors also participate in it, with their own freedom. And the director is the Holy Spirit, who is neither the author nor the actor. He updates the drama and adapts it to each actor, so that the whole authentically represents what the Father wants, but on the basis of the identity and particularity of each of the actors. The Father has entrusted to the Spirit the good performance of his work, in which the actors must allow themselves to be led, docilely but creatively by the director, so that the work as a whole may be fully successful. In this metaphor we can understand more clearly how the Trinitarian God is involved in the play, always through the human actors, who maintain their personality and freedom based on God's overall plan.

Action in a pathetic scenario

In order to understand what a Christological theology of history means, it is important to keep in mind that, for Balthasar, history, after the coming of Christ, is now under the sign of the Apocalypse. This essentially means that history is subject to a struggle because there is "a titanic rebellion of men precisely in order not to allow themselves to be sheltered in the mystery of the cross. The anti-Christian attitude and disposition are only found after Christ"[394] . The consequence of this is that the glory of God, manifested in Christ, who fights against the powers of evil, can only be truly contemplated - in its truth - when the believer makes a commitment and is ready to fight alongside the Lamb. All this implies that "revelation is a field of battle"[395] and, starting from that "agonizing" revelation, all of history must be understood in the same way[396] . Balthasar develops this "apocalyptic" conception of history from two great "pathetic" (= aporetic) aspects: (1) the apocalyptic understanding of history as totality and (2) human pathetic existence.

The fact that history is under the sign of the Apocalypse, beyond all the exegetical aspects that this might imply, is only meant here to express the existence of a "fundamental law of post-Christian history: the more the Kingdom of Christ is maintained as the light of the world [...] the more violent the opposition to it and the contrary action of Satan are unleashed"[397] . This law was already evident in the Old Testament and is manifested with even greater force in the life of Jesus. But now, since the Apocalypse, this law is under the guarantee of the final victory, thanks to the triumph of the Lamb. On the other hand, this means that history does not advance in a continuous and progressive process of integration, but rather under the sign of growing conflict. With all this Balthasar is not looking at empirical history, but rather, starting from Revelation, it is about a higher vision, given by God in his revelation and referring to history as a complete event, including its end, which thus integrates all empirical events[398] . It is a kind of *summa* of history, where "the event of Christ is certainly found as the center that dominates over this history, but really *over* and not properly *in* it"[399] . Time, thus understood

eschatologically (= Christologically), gathers in its center the whole revelatory and redemptive event, in such a way that it incorporates in each instant of time, understood here horizontally, the event that bursts vertically from above, making history a *kairos* of the encounter with God. From what has been said, it can be perceived that for believers life becomes difficult and suffering, but at the same time, according to Johannine theology, that same suffering and difficulties are already a divine judgment on the sin of the world; and for believers they are also the participation in the atonement carried out by the Lamb. In short, what Revelation wants to reveal is the structural *theological* situation of history, which can be expressed as the dialectic between faith and unbelief - but which at the same time advances toward judgment - all of which should not be seen chronologically, but as coextensive with our history. It is not a matter of explaining or announcing the "future" of history, but of showing how it is qualified in its basic and permanent structure.

This characteristic of being under the sign of the Apocalypse gives the history of the world, in which God manifests himself and acts, a particularly dramatic character. But "the dramatic dimension of revelation does not lie in the uncertainty of the outcome as regards God's victory [...], but in what constitutes its authentic content [...]: the simultaneity of God's superiority over history and God's intra-historical commitment, [... where] the always-more of God's commitment provokes the always-more of the opposition to him"[400] . That then is "the dramatic rhythm" "which constitutes the specifically dramatic element in theodrama"[401] . For, although God has always been present in the drama, this drama continues to have a rhythm *in crescendo* [= growing]. God's ever greater commitment awakens ever greater opposition. Therefore, when the Logos enters directly into history, the beast also becomes present (in the words of Revelation itself). And the fact that the Lamb has already defeated the beast and that God will definitively impose himself at the end of history does not take away from all the other persons in history - who have their own freedom - the task of accepting or rejecting the presence of the Lamb; and this is understood in an existential and definitive sense.

Thus, the content of history, as a theodrama, surpasses all intramundane calculation and all controllable action. Therefore, the only thing that can be affirmed is that the Lamb has conquered, but he has conquered "*in so far as* he was slain," in such a way that "his followers" must continue this "struggle" along the same path, that is, only "with the weapons of faith (1 Thess 5:8; Eph 6:14f.)"[402] . This is also the tension that every Christian must assume in his own personal history.

2. The second aspect that must be kept in mind in order to understand the characteristics of a Christological theology of history is the pathetic (= aporetic) existence of the human being in the world. This refers to the fact that human existence is subject to a series of tensions that give it part of its dramatic and even tragic condition. Balthasar mentions four of them. In the first place, we find the *pathetic* existence of finitude with a yearning for absoluteness. Every human being, in spite of knowing that he is finite, experiences in himself a claim to absoluteness. This can be seen, for example, in his capacity for reasoning and judgment, which unfolds with force on the basis of his limitation and finiteness, but which does so "against the background of what is absolutely valid, true and good"[403] . However, in each of these actions the problem arises that one would like to make judgments and offer values and actions that are forever valid and are not subject to the expiration of one's own life and the fragility of one's own decisions, and this is not possible. The human being perceives himself within a time and space that is always finite and fragile, but that does not prevent him from always wanting and trying to say a definitive and permanent word for his life and that of others. Every person who is in finite history -spatially and temporally- trusts that he can influence it with something more definitive and that surpasses the finiteness of the day to day, but that is impossible given his own limitation.

Secondly, we see the pathetic existence of a life limited temporally, but with repercussions beyond time itself. "The individual lives in a finite time. It is not given to him, it is given to him"[404] , but then he can do whatever he wants with that time. He cannot demand that it

be given to him and with that he cannot dispose of its beginning -in fact, no one was asked anything before he was born-, but once received, he takes advantage of it with all his might and with full - albeit finite- freedom. But the unwanted happens: it *abruptly* comes to an end, certainly expected, but at the same time not "expected" and generally not wanted either. So here again he is faced with a drama: the fact that all his acts are delimited and framed within that finite space of time that has been granted to him, but that they have repercussions beyond himself and beyond the time granted to him. Now, this experience that is so personal is also perceived to be present in all the other members of the human race. And if everyone experiences it, then everyone else is with me in the same situation, and therefore we must all together answer for the world as a whole.

> In the I-thou and I-us relationship, the responsibility of the individual for his attitude and behavior in the face of death extends to the attitude and behavior of others in the face of their own death. In this way the individual becomes co-responsible for the common destiny of humanity, and not only for what concerns the period of time in which he lives, but also for what concerns the time of the generations that will survive him and in whose destiny he participates in a direct way [...].Here lies for the individual (for the totality of individuals) a new pathetic moment, since his task (to contribute something lasting to change) is no longer limited exclusively to his own existence, but extends to the time of humanity, which escapes him entirely, but in which his personal decisions have an incalculable social repercussion[405]
> .

One's way of life influences not only one's own life, but extends limitlessly to all mankind.

The next two pathetic aspects of human life are even more intense: the presence of death and the mystery of evil. Indeed, "the pathos of the behaviors of existence reaches a clear radicalization in the enigma of death"[406] . Dying is the most common and natural thing for every human being. However, since the human being has a yearning for the absolute and always seeks more and wishes to continue progressing, death also means an absolute contradiction of what he wants for his existence. That is why it is equally presented as the most "abnormal" and tragic thing in existence. Death simply means the end of the life that has been experienced - and usually enjoyed - so far. Biologically, death is the most everyday and obvious thing for every person. However, spiritually, for each person, one's own death is not just

another death among many other deaths, but is an extraordinarily unique event, which is experienced as something immensely solitary, and usually occurs in the midst of the pain of life ending. There is no escape from death, which is the end of itself as it has been until now. Faith in eternal life in no way exempts from this pathetic experience. It gives it meaning and gives it tools to face it, but it does not exempt it from its painful condition.

Finally, there is still the most dramatic tension, which is the existence of *evil* in human life and history. From what we have already said about finite freedom, its self-possession and its orientation towards the good - but precisely because it was finite, it was capable of doing evil - we can expose here this other pathetic element of the human being: its capacity to do evil, in spite of wanting to do good. Since freedom is the greatest thing a human being has, it can become tragic when it can be characterized as evil. However, in this same tragedy, the greatness of freedom and of the one who has given it is also paradoxically manifested:

> The possibility of evil proceeds from the polarity of human freedom, which *has been* given and which *knows itself to be* given, so that in apprehending itself in this way it must be recognized as due-to (and thus transcended): in a unique act of choice. By virtue of this choice the absolute good-giving remains on a latent level, while its dimension of being a gift appears in all its brilliance to finite freedom . [407]

The mystery of evil and its paradox - which also makes it so pathetic - consists in the fact that the negative option can be realized precisely when the pole of the autonomy of finite freedom is granted such absoluteness that it is no longer perceived as a gift from God, and therefore ceases to be oriented toward God. For this very reason it decides against God. However, the same God who has given it freedom cannot be absent from it. On the contrary, God continues to be fully present in finite freedom, since he continues to communicate something of himself to it: its capacity to decide for itself, even to decide against the one who is giving it this capacity. One cannot think of anything more pathetic and dramatic for the history of the human being than this mystery of evil, the product of freedom given as a capacity for good.

With all this, the two basic presuppositions for understanding the

meaning of a Christological theology of history have already been described: the Trinitarian presence of God in history and the dual condition of the human being, which is expressed in the pathetic situation of existing between finitude and absoluteness. On the basis of these presuppositions, we can now review Balthasar's very acute historical conception, which he describes as Christological and dramatic.

Christ as the eschatological center of history

In *Theodramatics* III, Balthasar gives a long introduction to the exegetical-theological method necessary for an adequate Christology[408] . There he addresses the relationship between exegesis and dogmatics that is present in the early Christological elaboration and, in particular, in the theme of the eschatological consciousness of Jesus[409] . In this context, by exposing the exegetical-christological foundations for a Christian eschatology, he shows why Christ is the determining center of all eschatology[410] . Following Martin Hengel - who finds that in the New Testament writings there is a "dogmatic outburst [...] so surprisingly early that [...] within a very few years the dogmatic outburst [...] takes place [...].in a very few years the decisions that will mark the Christology of the great ecumenical councils" - affirms that this makes it very difficult to think that this is only a "'superstructure' placed over a simply human existence (although prophetic or superprophetic) like that of Jesus", since this does not fit with "a plausible image of the historical Jesus". On the contrary, what happens here is "also a 'hatching' on the part of exegesis"[411] , that is, in the New Testament itself - even in the life of Jesus - biblical languages and contents were sought to explain this entirely new phenomenon that was *Jesus* himself.

Thus, when confronting both "hatchings" it can be affirmed with certainty that Jesus had a very clear awareness that with his mission "the total alienation (therefore, until its end) of the world from God" was definitively ended, which - as is well known - is the central content of his preaching about the coming of the reign of God. This implies that "for the earthly Jesus the decisive part of his mission,

which overflows the human measure, has yet to be fulfilled"[412] . If this is so, then Jesus expected an *end* for himself, which also meant the "end of the world", since this is an integral part of "the apocalyptic expectation"[413] that existed around the idea of the reign of God. Indeed, this expectation at that time was understood as the final judgment of God on the old world and, therefore, it also implied the definitive change of *aeon.* However, in addition to this, in Jesus there is also something very specific and which clearly distinguishes him from the common apocalyptic hope of that time: it is the fact that what is expected has already come and is in direct relation to himself, as Son of the Father, who is Lord of heaven and earth. This means that the apocalyptic hope is entirely assumed by the person of Jesus, that is, it is absorbed in his life and destiny, including his death. All this explains very well why Jesus awaits *his* hour - which depends entirely on the moment decided by the Father - and, along with it, his awareness that the coming and establishment of the reign of God will be realized only by a supernatural intervention of God. The Father decides the hour and to Jesus alone belongs the willingness to accept that hour. Now, all this has been fulfilled by his paschal mystery of death and resurrection, which is also indivisible from his glorious parousia. In this way *a post-Easter historical time* has been established-the time of the Church-but which must nevertheless be understood as a whole with the paschal-parousia event and, therefore, as a time already qualified as eschatological from its core, due to the resurrection of Christ .[414]

From this biblical-dogmatic foundation, Balthasar understands Christ as the *determining center of history*. Indeed, if the destiny of Jesus is intimately linked to the coming of the reign of God and this has been fulfilled with his death and resurrection-at the "hour" arranged by the Father-then there he has arrived "in an original sense, at the 'end of the world,' whether the time of our world continues chronologically or not being unimportant"[415] . This gives a new meaning to the concept of "end of the world," since it now also implies the time following the death of Jesus himself, which it thus determines in its content. Therefore, if with Jesus the end of time has come, then all Christians -

and the world in general - are determined by the destiny of Jesus. All are dead and risen in Christ (Paul) because "the law of the primarily Christological eschatology that embraces everything is universal, even if not all realize it and perhaps still adhere anachronistically to the Judeo-apocalyptic expectation of the end". With all this one can well understand why in the New Testament there is a certain phenomenon of interference - for the exegetical reasons already mentioned - "between the two ways of conceiving eschatology: on the one hand, there is the fact that humanity after Christ (and especially the Church) is fundamentally determined by the eschatology of Christ, with the differentiating articulation of the 'already' and of the 'not yet' [...] and not 'in vision and possession'. On the other hand, to articulate and visualize this specifically New Testament difference, the Judeo-apocalyptic expectation is still available"[416] . But if we keep in mind what we have said about the emergence in exegesis and dogmatics-where language borrowed from Judaism is used-and the apocalyptic theme of the *in crescendo* of the "no" in the face of the "yes" verified on the part of God in Christ, the conclusion is that, from now on, there is no more history that is not Christological.

The so-called "theology of the present" of John's Gospel is basically a clarification in narrative form of what we have just said. There, when Jesus is presented in faith, he is not understood "in a unilateral way as the pre-Easter Jesus, but as the Redeemer, who integrates his whole destiny, of which the 'elevation' (death and resurrection) is a part". It is a kind of "'correction' not only of the Jewish expectation of the end as such, but also of the rest of the Jewish expectation within the early Church and its documents"[417] . For John "the event of Christ, always seen in its totality, is the vertical irruption of the consummation in horizontal time; an irruption that does not leave unaltered this time with its present, past and future, but absorbs it into itself and recalculates it starting from itself"[418] . In this way, all the past is actual in the eschatological presence of Jesus, just as the judgment of the Father has been transferred to Jesus, who exercises it through his presence in the world. Therefore, everything is decided by the attitude that each one assumes before the risen Jesus. Hence, for John,

eschatological time is at the same time Christological time. John includes all the horizontal drama in the vertical, "but this vertical remains the place of a tense drama where the event between God and humanity, centered in Jesus Christ [...], remains the immediate realization of the drama of the covenant of Yahweh with Israel, actual throughout history"[419] . This is, moreover, the same as what the Synoptics said: the attitude towards Jesus determines access to the reign of God, who has already made himself present in him as the "end" of history. "He who receives me receives him who sent me" (Mt 10:40; Lk 9:48).

In synthesis, a *Theo-drama*, where independently of the time of the world and the development of its history, God is the one who acts with all the initiative and he is the one who seals a covenant and leads human behavior with his grace, it is obvious that it must be predominantly vertical -without ceasing to be horizontal in all its freedom and development-; in the understanding that the vertical is the "principle that gives meaning and form"[420] to the drama. This is possible because "between the 'time' of God and the time of the world mediates the time of Christ: synthesizing in himself the time of the world, but also revealing the over-time of God"[421] .

> There is no specific horizontal theodrama in the New Testament, but only a vertical theodrama in which every instant of time, insofar as it is Christologically important, is elevated and referred to the glorified Lord, who has assumed and elevated to overtime the content of all history: life, death and resurrection .[422]

Thus, after Christ, we can no longer expect anything else in the history of the world to be decisive or to give it a definitive meaning, because that has already happened. It is only possible - and we must work at it - the irradiation and theological explanation of what has already happened, so that this definitive event becomes a dynamizing instance of history itself, which will give history an ever more dramatic character. History has mysteriously and definitively entered the Lord's domain.

Meaning of the primacy of the vertical and its relation to the horizontal

If history is to be understood as predominantly vertical, the question

necessarily arises as to the meaning and relationship between the vertical and the horizontal of historical events. Balthasar reflects on this when he speaks of the *pathetic scenario of the world,* in *Theodramatics* IV[423] . There he states that, although the primordial human experience is obviously a horizontal history, the revelation of Christ has also shown us the vertical aspect inherent in it. And although the human being without revelation cannot discover this vertical aspect, somehow he has always longed for it and sought it. This is Balthasar's basic approach .[424]

"The 'natural' (pre-Christian) man has never wanted to develop and understand the horizontal history without a vertical dimension that rises up from himself. That is why he has tried to rise above himself and propose some solution that could give a fuller and more complete meaning to that horizontal history. This has taken the form of polytheism or animism or some other kind of "natural" religiosity. Likewise, in the modern world, when "revelation *from* above" has not been accepted, "then man's opening upwards has become forever a purely anthropological fact, which henceforth belongs to the immanence of horizontal history"[425] . For this, an absolute meaning had to be attributed to finite things, which have only a relative meaning. This has been the case of ideologies and of all intra-worldly utopias, which present themselves as interpretative structures of history. These projects are not necessarily false in themselves - since they may be based on true paradigms - but since they are based on ideas that are in themselves finite and therefore only partly true, they cannot adequately respond either to the basic longing or to the total truth of history. This places the human being once again in a pathetic situation in the world. That is the great paradox of the human being, which he can never eliminate from his own life: he walks through a horizontal history, but with a deep longing to encounter a vertical history as well. This paradox has been expressed in various ways throughout history: in pre-Christian antiquity it was formulated as the fatal separation between heaven and earth, where, in spite of everything, the human being somehow belonged to the celestial; and in the Hebrew world it was presented as a covenant between the

living God and the human being - who is his image - but who cannot attribute to himself any right to an eternal life nor any real capacity to fulfill this covenant. However, that same "historical situation of man in this world," which clearly appears without a possible solution, precisely "for this reason he keeps waiting for redemption, but without being able in any way to build it in advance or even to suspect it"[426] . Only revelation from on high will be able to show him what it truly means that "history is essentially played out in the vertical between heaven and earth"[427] , as is clear from the Apocalypse.

From this historical scenario and for a better understanding of what is meant by a primarily vertical history, Balthasar contrasts it with what would be a crass interpretation of history as "continuous intra-worldly progress". The topic is complex and has occupied Balthasar at various times, and we will return to it at greater length a little later. But as far as our argument is concerned, he exposes what he calls "the phantom of progress," as an opposite of the vertical, Christological characteristic he is trying to explain[428] . And he describes three possible ways of understanding this progress - some perfectly compatible with the verticality of history - so as not to leave the impression that there is no progress at all, or that he did not consider the horizontality of history. But he does so in order to make explicit what kind of progress it is not admissible to postulate. In the first place, he affirms that it is with Israel that humanity assumes for the first time a definitively horizontal dimension in order to understand its history. For the People of God, time had a beginning and runs towards a future, where that which constitutes the hope of their salvation will arrive definitively on earth. Now, Israel understood this horizontal idea of history as being attentive and vigilant to the future event that was expected, and to be ready to go out to meet that promised salvation, but in no way could one speak or think of a gradual, continuous, historical and measurable progress of the approach of that salvation. Secondly, if we look at the natural life of the individual human being, there the idea of progress has a valuable and authentic meaning. Indeed, each instant that follows the previous one - since the human being is self-conscious and reflexive with

respect to himself - can assume his past, valuing it with his reason and projecting it with his will towards the future. Thus, each instant acquires a more definitive and absolute value than the previous one and life can progress, although always from finite fragments and within a finite framework. But it is indeed a constant growth, which with memory assumes its past in the face of the future. This is also called the "historicity" of the human being. In this sense, each individual gives a meaning to his life, and a direction towards the true and good absolute; and even if he never reaches it, it still produces an authentic progress in his life. But, thirdly, "from the point of view of world history, progress can [also] be sought and fixed in those areas in which the achievements of one generation are taken up by the next and developed further"[429] , i.e., in the field of technology and only there. This has been known since antiquity, but it was the Enlightenment, based on the exponential and qualitatively new growth of technology, that introduced the idea of the unlimited progress of mankind[430] . But from there we moved on to the idea - and the experience - of the growth of society as such and the idea of the "new man" which, in essence, sacrificed the autonomy and dignity of the individual for the sake of the future or the new society. Historical examples of these projects are innumerable[431] . In many cases, the interpretation of development even included the messianic moment, giving technical and scientific progress - also that of ideas - a religious coloration. But in all these "technical" projects a power structure was always hidden, where progress was achieved at the expense of the individual[432] . This is the exact opposite of a vertical structure of history, since it is precisely the horizontal absolutization of history, closed to the vertical. With all this it is also clearer what Balthasar means by the vertical being the primordial in history.

History before Christ

Balthasar also refers to the possible theological stages into which it is (or is not) possible to divide history. As is to be expected, the only possible division - if there is one - is between that which precedes and that which follows the Christ event. Everything else - given the

vertical character of history, as we have just explained - must be framed within the Christological event and in relation to it. Hence he first refers to history prior to Christ and then sets forth what would be a Christological theology of history .[433]

With respect to the history of the world before Christ, for Balthasar, it cannot be divided into theologically relevant stages, with the exception of the unique role of Israel:

> History prior to Christ cannot be divided into acts [from a theodramatic point of view]; the only appreciable articulation is the emergence of Israel's destiny as a particular, but paradigmatic, process in the direction of God's action in Christ. However eventful human history may be both in the unfathomable prehistoric period and in the most encompassing of historical times, it presents no relevant caesura from a theodramatic perspective .[434]

This means that the history prior to Christ - all this looked at from a theological point of view - must be understood as the totality-one of humanity before God, where within that totality a people - the people of Israel - is chosen as the archetype and pedagogy towards Christ, the only Savior of the world. Although in the long human history and prehistory we can find so many periods, cultures and religious approaches, nevertheless, in all that lapse of time before Christ, every relationship with God can be understood in a unique way in its basic structure -a longing and a search-, and that only receives a novelty of different rank with the intervention of God in the Old Covenant -as an archetype-, which begins the only determining process of the history of God with man: the revelation in the Son. Expressed in biblical terminology, this means that there are only two covenants of God with humanity: (1) "The covenant with Noah", as "the universal image of the fundamental reconciliation of God with creatures"[435] , and which implies "an indissoluble bond between heaven and earth, a covenant established before the separation between Jews and pagans and which refers to a first promise [...] that was the true starting point of history"[436] . It is all about that long history that takes place before the incarnation of the Word and which in the Bible has been called the "times of ignorance" (Acts 17:30)[437] , where God - with an eternal desire for reconciliation - "bears" human sins for the sake of future redemption. There the human being is under the double tension of being accepted by God and at the same time rejected; of being free in

his life, but at the same time chained by sin; and all this while awaiting his only - and as yet unknown - possibility of a solution: the incarnation of the Word. And (2) the covenant of Sinai, which outlines the way in which God will be reconciled with the world. A particular and paradigmatic covenant, although not universal. There Israel is theologically qualified by election and is thus ethically obligated to respond appropriately, as its figure illuminates the times before Christ about the eternal event of God's reconciliation with the world. It is a sketch of what will be the drama to be revealed in Christ.

In this way we can now briefly review what Balthasar proposes about both moments of history prior to Christ, which prepare his Christological theology of history.

Israel is the archetypal model that delineates salvation, that is, it sketches how the drama -the joint action- between God and human beings will be in that unique and definitive act that is the incarnation of the Word of God. Indeed, in the paradigm of Israel -from Abraham and Moses- "it is from the beginning about the relationship of finite and infinite freedom"[438] under the central theme of the covenant. The covenant - if it is to be a universal model - must involve the responsibility of the human being, so that his freedom is taken seriously, despite the fact that the entire initiative is God's and that he retains complete sovereignty over his will and his actions. However, history soon showed that Israel was never able to fulfill its part of the covenant. Its permanent attitude - denounced by the prophets - was unfaithfulness to the commandments, to justice and to love; even though it then tried - vainly and uselessly - to fulfill and assure God by means of the law and its strict fulfillment; because in reality this was only a behavioral transformation towards a more subtle form of unfaithfulness. All this is showing that Israel, in spite of being an archetype, is still under a tragic component in its history.

But Israel has acquired yet another important peculiarity: it has become a *mirror* of the ambiguities of all pre-Christian religions, since what in pagan religions remained uncritically present, in Israel was placed and manifested as pedagogy towards Christ.

All this was only intended to demonstrate a fundamental fact: that in Israel, whose

definitive election cannot be doubted (Rom 11), the ambiguity of every pre-Christian religion that is uncritically maintained in pagan religions comes to light in a prototypical way, which constitutes the necessary prehistory (pedagogy: Gal 4:2) of the incarnation of God. The demon cults (1 Cor 10:20) of paganism, which at its root cannot be denied an authentic search for God (Acts 17:27), remain, as sin, "dead", but emerge vivid and plastic when the light of the covenant and the divine law fall upon them (Rom 7:8). Only from there can we judge pagan religions in their amphibology: as amazement before the glory of God in his creation, which leads to adore his wisdom in creatures; and at the same time their incapacity to discover the creator from his works and to adore him (Wis 13:1-9), incapacity that ends up being the will not to recognize what is known of God (Rom 1:19-21) .[439]

In this way, Israel has made present and explicit what in other religions has remained only implicit: every religion, as an encounter with "the divine", inexorably implies a decision with respect to God (which is proper to the Theo-dramatics of humanity). Thus, what in the other religions - as they revolved around themselves - remained hidden (because in the midst of all their religious structure one cannot know with certainty what is the true *attitude* of each person with respect to the true *God*), in Israel became manifest from the Covenant onwards as an ever greater explicit *no* of the human being to the gratuitous and ever greater *yes* of the true God. This experience of Israel will imply the visibility of the reality of sin, judgment and salvation in which God has been intimately involved - since creation - and which reached its culminating moment in the Paschal Mystery. Israel has very painfully shown that history was a journey towards a *crescendo* of sin and judgment, which then became a *crescendo* also of salvation, but not without cost, even -and mainly- for God himself.

2. With respect to the meaning of the pre-Christian religions - "the covenant with Noah" - Balthasar tries to avoid two extremes: to consider the other religions as "pure human hybris that resists divine revelation" (Barth), "or the opposite of it, according to which the salvific will of God in favor of all men would be addressed to them in such a dehistoricized way that, at least at the 'transcendental' level [...], it would apply timelessly to every man, independently of the way in which the objective religious traditions were graduated" (Rahner). Avoiding both extremes, our author considers it very important to take into account that religions in their systems also include an aspect

of guilt and sin, since sin and guilt are an inherent and tragic part of all the subjects that elaborate them. The sinner leaves his sinful imprint on what he builds. This should put us on our guard against any overly optimistic interpretation of religions and their openness to Christ. In truth, "the projects of non-Christian religions are both *advances* towards the insoluble question of man's being and destiny (with their reference to the world and the absolute) and *distancing* from the answer freely given by God in Jesus Christ"[440] . In a way, religions try to anticipate the solution that Jesus Christ will present, but at the same time they close the space for such a solution. That is their tragedy. Consequently, this intertwining of positive and negative aspects within all religions is what for Balthasar makes it impossible to think of a kind of "transcendental Christology" or "Christology in search" that, with its optimism, despite the presence of the Holy Spirit in all religions, does not consider in all its seriousness the presence of sin in human life, individually and collectively understood. And this can be verified in a factual way:

> Why, when Christ appeared, was he not greeted by pagans, Jews and Christians as the Savior at last found, but was rejected by all of them? Because no "seeking Christology" wants to find precisely that which the Creator God has kept hidden in himself "as the unfathomable riches of his hidden mystery" from eternity in order to reveal it through the Church in the fullness of time (Eph 3) .[441]

If it were so simple that all mankind expected and sensed Christ and his salvation, it would have been easy to recognize him and his original and unique way of manifesting himself would not have been surprising. But we know that this is not what really happened.

For Balthasar, things must be understood differently. In fact, there is nothing to prevent us from raising the question of the convenience of looking for the exact time of Christ's arrival in history, or of looking at all the events that prepared for his coming, and thus developing a certain "theology" of pre-Christian history, whether more optimistic or more pessimistic (what the Fathers called *praeparatio evangelica* [= preparation of the Gospel]). But on condition that this does not mean wanting to realize with it "a theory of [pre-Christian] history that is of theological relevance"[442] -beyond Israel-, since the data are all relative (what under one aspect can be valued as progress, in another sense

can be seen as the opposite) and in part also uncontrollable. Outside the Old Testament there is no other way to illuminate the time before Christ. The path is another:

> For the structure of subjective and objective religion it is sufficient, as we have already explained, to start from the *imago Dei* created in man, without denying a primary insertion in the supernatural reference to the God of revelation. For its consummation the image is referred a priori to its model (which can only be in the absolute), because in itself (in its three tensions: spirit-body, man-woman, individual-collectivity) it constitutively lacks the capacity for consummation, and because in the human journey towards the future no reconciliation of the empirical forms of man with his figure in conformity with the absolute and the fullness that it attains in him is foreseeable .[443]

What this means is that in order to grant theological value to religions there is no other way than to show the iconic but *fragmentary* character of each of their proposals, which, although they appear as attempts to absolutize partial aspects of the image of God in the human being, are nevertheless a reflection of a divine truth. In this way, innumerable *logoi spermatikoi* (= seeds of the Word) will be discovered, but even with the sum of all of them it will not be possible to reach the totality founded by God in Jesus Christ, which is unapproachable. Thus, all these *logoi* can very well be incorporated into the revelation in Christ, but only after their own conversion to Christ himself, and obviously once the Word had become incarnate. Before the coming of Christ they remained largely undecipherable . Hence, for Balthasar, it is only with caution that one can speak of a positive and salvific function of the pre-Christian religions and, for this reason, he prefers - with rather biblical language - to speak of the time of God's patience. For all these reasons, he thinks that it is not possible to verify in the pre-Christian religions a basic orienting current that brings us closer to Christ, but that this is only found in Israel. It is clear that here Balthasar assumes a critical position vis-à-vis the "transcendental Christology" of K. Rahner (and others)[444] . Indeed, in *Seriousness with Things. Cordula or the authentic case*[445] , Balthasar criticized very strongly the issue of anonymous Christians. But beyond this polemic with Rahner[446] -which is not our subject here-, what is important at this point is to understand the underlying reason for this Balthasarian understanding of pre-Christian religions: if history is theologically understood from Christ, then before his coming

we find only fragments -due to the character of the divine image of the human being- and not a historical quality comparable to the later period, unless it is in Israel, which is the Christological archetype of history.

Christological theology of history

With the coming of Christ, history has been marked Christologically, universally and forever. Balthasar treats the subject from four complementary perspectives.

Periodization of post-Christ history

We confess in faith that everything stems from the fact - essential in the Bible - that "Jesus Christ presents himself in the history of the world as the representative of God: in his place, he will fight to the end the battle against the hostility of human freedom and for the triumph of the kingdom to come. This task of Jesus Christ did not end with the event of his resurrection; on the contrary, it must continue until he has put an end to every evil power and, as Paul says, has handed over the kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor 15:24-28). But just after his resurrection - and precisely for this reason - according to the Apocalypse, the battle has become harder because we are already in the end time. In other words, Christ's perfect "yes" to the Father and to the world is what has provoked the total demonic "no" of the Antichrist. In fact, "the alternative raised by the word and action of Jesus is so decisive that, as a historical event, it divides history into two sides"[447] . Now, "from the moment in which the event can be apprehended historically in its effects, there already exists a dramatic theology of history, capable of being differentiated in its different situations".

Consequently, from this primordial fact we find history divided in a "dramatic" way. We can speak of a first and long period of God's "patience" - "passing over those times of ignorance" (Acts 17:30) - in which, through the work of the covenant sealed by God, the people of Israel arose from within, the which, besides being an archetype of God's action for the world, is at its very heart divided between acceptance and rejection of that same covenant. Along with this, we

must also mention the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world of other pre- and post-Christian religions, but "the concrete forms of this presence cannot be specified theologically", but only recognized and differentiated on the basis of revelation[448] . And after the resurrection, the world is faced with a new and unique situation: to accept or not to accept God's invitation made in his Son.

> Thus the counting of the years of the history of the world before and after Christ has a theological basis, also because of the historical fact that the entrance of Christ casts its light not only forward, but also backward, back to the beginning, in the sense of the theology of an *Ecclesia ab Abel* [= Church from Abel]. On the other hand, a division into periods of the history of the Church and of the world since Christ will hardly be fruitful .[449]

Thus, beyond these general theological stages and these "qualifying" divisions of history, something theologically relevant can be said about the future history of the world after Christ and in general about the situation of the world in every age, only from the very words of Christ that prophesy about the destiny that awaits the disciples if they want to be faithful to their master (cross, persecutions and eternal reward) (Mk 13:12-13). All this precludes any other periodization of the history of the world after Christ, as has been attempted so many times, from the millenarianists or Joachim of Fiore or later Hegel. Nor is it possible to speak of either progress or regression: by what criterion would one judge an advance or regression? What we can say is that we are facing a battle, with two elements mixed to the extreme - yes and no, triumph and defeat - in such a way that the history of the world can be categorized theologically only in a Christological sense.

Jesus' claim determines history

Jesus himself, with his unprecedented claim to be the manifestation of the Father, offered the authentic reason and laid the true foundation for a theological (= Christological) understanding of history. This understanding of history did not originate in a merely intrahistorical reflection, but in the fact - known by revelation - that "the absolute logos is present in history". Indeed, "the claim of Jesus is so provocative" that "in him it becomes clear that the transcendent becomes immediately present in the 'categorial' and here manifests itself." Thus, in his intra-historical words, we recognize his claim to

"put the whole world in its genuine place"[450] , i.e., he is the one who will determine the destiny of the world. Three great affirmations - with their respective consequences - are the basis for understanding history under Christological categories: (1) "He who is not with me is against me" (Mt 12:30). In the face of Jesus, no neutrality is possible. Each person begins his life with a personal decision, but in such a way that later the first decision of life will depend on this new decision in the direction of or against God. This means that the Christian is disrooted from himself and transferred to the reign of the Son. And the rejection of this recognition and transfer - this desire to be free from one's own original foundation - is the fundamental human sin, which becomes fully luminous through this provocation of Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate discriminating instance (superior to all others), but on the basis of the force of his internal logic and not of his power.

(2) "He who does not gather with me scatters" (Mt 12:30). Jesus came into the world to gather together what was scattered, which also means to separate what was only apparently united. This is "also the law of human reason, which analyzes in order to be able to synthesize" (*intellectus dividens et componens* [= intellection that distinguishes and integrates]). It is a matter of distinguishing, separating, in order to unite and put in relation. According to the idea underlying John's prologue, it is a "second creation [that] has to repeat the process of the first: first to separate in order to bring order to the chaos and then to put the parts in relation to one another. *Distinguer pour unir*." "Here there is reason to think that this moment in history, in which this process of rationality is going to impose itself universally, is not unrelated to the moment in which the provocation of Jesus in the world takes place." In fact, here Balthasar, following among others Rahner , conjectures that it is perfectly possible to think that Jesus appears in the history of the world when in that history an "effective taking possession of humanity by itself" (Rahner)[451] begins to take place adequately and maturely. That is, when history has reached a culminating moment of growth - conscious and active - that makes humanity live in a world that it has given itself. It is perfectly plausible that the Christ event occurred precisely at that moment,

when humanity can effectively be a universal unity and the Gospel can effectively reach historically the whole world, because politically there is a Mediterranean unity, culturally there is a common language, and philosophically there is a rational maturity that has overcome the mythical world. Therefore - historically considered - it can recapitulate all things in itself (Eph 1:10).

(3) "No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6):

> Once again, it must be emphasized that this sharpening of the dramatic confrontation is only possible after Christ; it is at this moment that the diffuse religious sentiment, which is at the heart of all pre-Christian projects of meaning, is launched, still under the pressure of the adversary, against the claim of Jesus to concentrate in himself all that is religious .[452]

Naturally, this claim of Jesus was unacceptable to the ancient Roman world, since to deny to that world its divine condition - emperor included - was to take away from humanity that protection of feeling socially under a cosmic order; in such a way that, in that denial, which cost the lives of many, Christianity was syndicated as atheism. Today the situation has changed radically, since the state has been desacralized and society has been secularized. Thus, at present, only two possibilities remain: (a) To understand that "the primitive religious sentiment that religiously linked the men to the *theion* [= the divine]" has now been deepened in Jesus, who shows us "that man owes his existence, both on the natural and personal level, to God the Father Creator of all things," and that therefore the world is *secular*, as something distinct from God[453] ; but as a *creature*, it has an even deeper bond with God, and cannot be thought of without reference or independently of the Creator (GS 36). (b) On the other hand, the other way is the loss of that natural bond and of those life-transmitting ties that open to transcendence, that is, "the loss of a measure innate to man, with which he can, under his own responsibility, project his world, adequate to man, human"[454] . The denial of this recognition will necessarily lead to a consciousness of absolute freedom, to a freedom understood as absolute autonomy.

Now, if the world was created in the *Logos* and through the *Logos* (Jn 1:1-3)-of which Jesus' claim is but its historical expression-then it is tremendously strange and paradoxical that he came to his own and his own did not receive him (Jn 1:11). The world, in its origin and its

goal, transcends itself in the *Logos;* hence the strangeness of its rejection, for then the world, not recognizing the *Logos* made flesh, does not recognize itself either. And thus it also closes itself to the hope of a final transfiguration. This gives human history a profound dramatic quality. Indeed, according to what has already been said about the characteristics of human freedom, this freedom is harmonized and fulfilled precisely in the divine will, in such a way that in the incarnation of the *Logos* it is fulfilled with the utmost radicality: perfect freedom and self-responsibility for one's own human action and perfect orientation toward absolute divine freedom. In Christ, the human being finds his fullness and his authentic freedom .[455]

A story that should be liberating

A Christological theology of history must be essentially liberating because "man regenerated in Christ participates in the freedom of Christ in a similar way: freed for a responsibility to be fulfilled before God and the world"[456] . But here he is faced with a new paradox since, as a creature, although he has been liberated in Christ, and the Holy Spirit has been poured into his heart, "he must continue to live in the midst of the limitations" of the old creation, under the factual dominion of sin and whose freedom refers to himself and to the intramundane. Hence the Christian is sent into the world to offer and implement a new freedom, which can be made effective as such in this present society. Is this possible? "Such a work of implantation cannot be impossible"[457] . "Such is the possibility of the grace of Christ in the midst of the impossibility of the grace of the world." Balthasar then offers two examples of theological proposals, where there is "something like the equivalent of a fullness of meaning on the intramundane plane" - with political and social efficacy - to show that God-given freedom is not only something individual, but that it must also become transformed into a social form of life[458] . Balthasar is not unaware of how difficult it is to think of such a project, as well as its realization . For this reason, in presenting these two proposals, he also externalizes his own criticisms, but which in no way annul either his great contribution or the indispensability of always seeking new paths

in this direction. The two examples are *Gaudium et Spes* and the *Latin American Theology of Liberation.* The following is a brief summary of Balthasar's exposition.

In the context of the Second Vatican Council, the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* provided an important reflection on the dialogue between faith and the present-day world, but it absolutely excluded from its horizon the apocalyptic law of the "*in crescendo*" of the non-God. This indicates its great contribution, but also its limitation. In fact, GS is right when he affirms that much of "what is human" is true and good because the human being has been created "in Christ". Moreover, if the incarnate Word has revealed to humanity its total and ultimate truth, he has also resolved for it the question of the definitive meaning of its existence (GS 22). And since the human person can exist only if he gives meaning to his existence, the question of meaning can also be a very good basis for the Church's dialogue with the world. All this has been a great contribution of GS, after the long anti-modernist attitude of the Church. But at the same time, the person is involved in multiple contradictions. He is divided within himself and is himself a battlefield. His life unfolds in the midst of a dramatic struggle between good and evil, in the individual and in society. There then appears the limitation of GS. For, although he rightly speaks of the importance of technical progress, this is not necessarily either a condition or a sign of authentic cultural or moral or institutional progress. Here begin the aporias of GS. On the one hand, today's *global* culture could have a convergence with the *catholicity* of the Church's mission, which is the ideal to strive for. But, on the other hand, the constitution does not clearly refer to the dangers that this same global *technical* culture holds (loss of the particular, tensions and new forms of domination). It is clear that the dialogue between culture and the Gospel is obligatory, but GS does not see "the demonic nature of the technification of culture, of society and of the individual, [as well as] the problems involved in the collaboration of Christians in this titanic enterprise"[459] . Moreover, GS sees and describes well the internal battle of the individual, but not so much the corresponding struggle on the social plane, which thus

appears much less visible. The correspondence between worldly culture and Catholic pretension also involves a struggle. In summary, with regard to our theme, this idea that technical progress is of great importance for the kingdom of God is very true and it is very necessary to affirm it, but, said *without counterbalance, it* leads to many eschatological texts of Scripture. Nevertheless, GS is very important to show what should be the attitude of Christians towards the present world: a look without fear and committed to its human and creatural development .[460]

With regard to *liberation theology,* Balthasar considers it urgent at this time, because its "call addressed to Christians and their decisive responsibility for the transformation of the course of this world constitutes an essential postulate of its mission" [461] . And although it hides the danger of wanting to achieve a system that completely controls the relationship between "earthly action and that of the Kingdom of God"[462] , "this call reveals, as perhaps never before, the dramatic situation of the Christian in this world"[463] . If he avoids falling into "a new kind of theological rationalism"[464] -even if it is from praxis-, his contribution will be one of the most important of the century. His contribution -and the proper safeguards- are highlighted in four steps, which gradually describe what the Christian's attitude should be. 1. The basic initial fact. Since creation, man has been called to shape the earth according to his own image of God. And this task must be proclaimed to all peoples. But, from the moment in which work seeks to empower nature, the will to power increases and it is no longer easy to determine the limit between work for survival (and the search to shape the image of God) and the effort to dominate the other. And with the oppression of the worker begins the inhumanity of work itself. On this first point it is clear that the Christian and every human being must fight against this inhuman machinery. But the results, it seems, will always be scarce, and although it will be possible to achieve balances, they will always be fragile. 2. A possible objection and its answer: But did not Christ's victory consist precisely in not opposing evil and in allowing himself to be led to the cross? Two things must be said clearly. On the one hand, the most basic

realism and the value of justice for all means that one can never renounce the organs of power in order to fight against injustice. On the other hand, the form of Christ and his death on the cross can never become simply an intramundane "political tactic"; rather, it is something that must certainly be assumed from faith, but in conjunction with political realism. 3. Distinction of planes. The strategy of the cross is a strategy in death, that is, in the transition to the next life. It is not a strategy that can be transferred to the struggle for power (to a sort of holy war). So there is a world order - with its secular and rational laws - and Christians living in the world must abide by them and fight for justice on the basis of them. But that world with its struggles cannot be "theologized" in a simplistic way. Certainly it is part of human life that is fundamentally oriented towards the reign of God, but the two planes are not identified. For this very reason, discernment in the social order, which is also permeated by evil and whose boundaries are not easy to distinguish, is very delicate. 4. Ultimate objective. The struggle for the poor is a Christian duty. But it must take place within a previous struggle, which is the battle of the Logos for the absolute good, the freedom given by God, which means the passage from the old Adam to the new Adam .[465]

The Church as part of history

A last aspect, although shorter, arises from three dramatic tensions of the Church, which show its historical character. They are in fact ecclesiological themes, but it is good to mention them here because they illuminate some aspects of history understood Christologically. (1) In Revelation the Church appears "as a grandiose unity, engaged in the 'battle of the Logos'"; but she is also "a community of sinners justified by baptism, and this condition of sinfulness, permanent and resurgent, leads her according to an internal logic to dissension"[466] . (2) But "there is an even more dangerous tendency in the Church, namely, the overcoming and emptying of faith by knowledge"[467] . For this reason, the Church always invites to the discretion of spirits, to the spiritual struggle, which discriminates between God and the anti-spirit. (3) A last dramatic tension of the Church is in relation to its

mission. This is due to the fact that the Church knows she is co-responsible for the world and, therefore, goes out to meet the world, not only with the proclamation of salvation, but also by penetrating it like leaven in the dough, in order to critically take on every culture and transform it. But this must be an encounter in love, which is difficult on both sides. On the side of culture, which always possesses a certain form that is already complete and perfect, the encounter with Christianity means a certain rupture towards the universal and transcendent. And therefore, on the side of the Gospel, there is always a risk that it "adapts" and does not fulfill its role of proclamation, or that the Church appears "outside" the culture, with an external and therefore unfruitful preaching. The great challenge will always be to penetrate without being destroyed. Here the criterion must always be Christological: the proclamation can be rejected, the flock is small and the fruits often come only after death. Moreover, there are members outside her and enemies within her, but they can neither be calculated nor known by any human law. Therefore, trust is placed only in the Holy Spirit who will always accompany her. The drama of a Christological story is also the drama of the Church engaged in the battle of the Lamb. In this way we see how the Church, as a world, is also under the profound dramaticity of history after Christ, but accentuated by the fact that she is the Body of Christ.

A hope that is also horizontal

Finally, the history of humanity, which theologically we have described as Christological, is also moved by Christian hope. The act of faith not only leaves room for hope, but also implies it. But it is necessary to distinguish Christian hope, which is based on the presence of the believed reality, from other non-Christian hopes. This is a topic that Balthasar deals with at length in *Theodramatics* V[468] , in the context of eschatology. There have been different ways of conceiving hope. The pagan world had only some traces of hope -imperfect-, since the uncertainty of the future was usually linked to a fear for the future. In contrast, "*Jewish* hope [was], in any case, chronologically, forward. [It was messianic"[469] and was based on the

promise made to the fathers. It was, therefore therefore, an expectation based on faith, but it is only horizontal. And then, in its secular version, it was transformed into a futuristic and secularized movement, "as an ab-solute movement subsisting in itself". For its part, the letter to the Hebrews defines Christian hope as "better" because it is based both on the resurrection of Christ, which has already taken place, and on the salvation of the whole human being, body and soul[470] . Thus, Christian hope is based on the risen Lord who, although he has not yet manifested himself in the fullness of his glory, nevertheless, that which is hoped for is - that very thing - that through which the human being has already been saved. "The whole to-come of the yet-to-come of the realized vision *is divinely,* Trinitarianly *embraced*"[471] .

With this we can see "that Christian hope is *above all vertical insofar* as it is based on the event of Christ" who, risen, is at the Father's side. But it is a verticality different from the pagan one (based on a mythical and remote event in the past) since it rests "on a concrete historical event", which is not purely past, "but comes continually to us"[472] . It is a hope that is truly a gift of God and that can be expressed biblically as living in Christ (Gal 2:20) or in being a "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 6:19). Thus hope means at the same time a "pledge" of what will be fully received (2 Cor 1:22). In such a way that it is not pure yet-no, because we already possess the essential of what we will receive: life in Christ through the Spirit. With this we can see that hope is also completely Christological-our hope is Christ-and thus involves the whole human being, including his personal and social history. Thus, despite its vertical priority, Christian hope also has a horizontal aspect. Balthasar expresses it as follows:

> A forward-looking horizontal theological hope [...] was the genuine contribution of the Old Testament and late Judaism to eschatology. Christian hope transforms this one-sided movement into the future into a hope in the definitive-present which alone as such is a yet-to-come in terms of its realization. But Jewish eschatology, especially in its secularized form, has exerted a decisive influence on the doctrine of the end and on the whole *pathos* of modern times. The new accentuation was powerfully supported by two characteristics of our culture: the discovery of the evolutionary tendency of our cosmos, especially of the ascent of the forms of life to the human, and the progressive technification, transformation of what was once given by nature into something available to man. No thinker is unaware of the

problems of this seemingly irreversible movement towards the future. Our question is whether this forward movement, which would be unintelligible without a hope to sustain it, has theological relevance within a Christian eschatology .[473]

In this way, Balthasar takes up these current contributions (in particular, Teilhard de Chardin, who tries to take on board "scientific evolutionism and [the] worldwide phenomenon of technical progress and its sociological repercussions," and Jürgen Moltmann, who overcomes and rescues theologically "the secularized Jewish eschatology") and unites them to the basic scheme of St. John, who inserts "the future aspect of hope and eschatology in the present aspect"[474] , in order to *rescue* also the *horizontal aspect* of Christian hope. In fact, Christian hope, insofar as it is theological, goes beyond this world - although without leaving it aside - in the sense that it takes it with it in order to present it to God.

To bring the world with him means that the Christian must bring hope to the world, especially to those who lack hope in the world. And this presupposes that he must create for the poor and oppressed dignified human conditions that allow them first of all to have hope. Hope can never be individualistic; it must always be social. And, as such, it cannot be satisfied with hoping for eternal salvation for others, but has to put others in a position to have hope, which very often means first of all creating the conditions that make possible the arrival of a theological hope .[475]

Thus, the ultimate goal of *theological* hope is not earthly goods in themselves, because Christian hope is essentially born of the cross. But since Christian hope is also participation in the mission of the Lord, and this mission is universal - not only geographically - and embraces all spheres of individual and social life, then it invites to a conversion that socially also implies a *change* in the world. With this it is clear that what is proposed by political theology can be integrated very well in all that has been said: mission is responsibility for the world as a whole and, since love, faith and hope are inseparable, the fruits of love and solidarity in the world are also the growth of hope in it. Hope and love are potentiated and act as a unity.

Critical questions to Balthasar

In a Theo-dramatic understanding of history, where the main protagonist is God-in Christ and the Spirit-and where human history is already decided in its fundamental theological aspect, there is

certainly the danger of a devaluation of human history as such, in terms of its possibilities[476] . That danger is present here in understanding the development of history as already marked by the Christological event. For example, S. Lösel states that "by centering participation in Theo-drama in the private sphere, Balthasar potentially eliminates the political and social dimension of a Christian understanding of God's salvific action in the world [...] Balthasar does not sufficiently recognize the socio-political element of salvation, then his concept of Theo-drama once again runs the risk of minimizing the importance of God's history with humanity as a collective reality and with the world as a whole"[477] . It seems to me that these and other criticisms of the same tenor should be taken very seriously[478] . Indeed, this danger lurks, if Balthasar's thought is not taken into account in its globality.

Every author has his own accentuations and Balthasar certainly has them, and in this topic they appear to be precisely in the direction of the danger just mentioned. His proposal undoubtedly allows a minimizing reading of human history and of the Christian's social commitment. But this is also the challenge of a good hermeneutic of his work. If the whole of his work is well examined and each aspect is weighed in its own merit, even though this danger remains a possibility, it can also be understood in a perfectly balanced way. In other words, Balthasar's accent is effectively placed on the protagonism of God in history -starting with the "agonizing" action of Christ- but with this he does not try to diminish the importance of the human response in the face of this manifestation of the Father. And furthermore, we must not forget the strong accent that Balthasar also places on human *freedom* and historicity and on the possibility that the human being expresses with his own existence a definitive no to God. With this we can appreciate more clearly that there is no sort of determinism of history, nor does he minimize the value of history, at least theoretically. But it is equally necessary to keep in mind that, in this and in every understanding of God's relationship with man, there will always be the danger of ignoring/minimizing the relevance of the role of the weakest (= the human person and his historical

development). Throughout the history of the Church we find innumerable proposals - with their due polemics - precisely around this relationship, which is nothing other than the duality of grace and freedom (Augustine/Pelagius, Molina/Báñez, Bayo and Jansenio). Here Balthasar offers one more proposal on the same theme, with a renewed and balanced form of solution, although always perfectible. But it must be understood in the context of his work as a whole.

On the other hand, there is always the danger of a quick, shallow or even ideological reading of the work of the great authors. And Balthasar does not escape this general rule. In fact, in some circles one can clearly perceive a partial reading of his work, which has hindered a better understanding of his thought and, above all, has overshadowed the nuances and breadth offered by his theology. The 16 volumes of his *Trilogy* - not to mention his 100 books and more than 600 articles - are too broad and full of erudition to dispatch in a couple of sentences or ideas some of his most complex themes, which have also occupied generations of theologians. Nevertheless, we must recognize that there are three topics that, as far as this chapter is concerned, are susceptible to deeper questioning. The arguments have already been presented in the development, so we will only mention their critical aspects here.

In the first place, when history is read vertically and from the Christological and eschatological event, where the destiny of this history has already been established, it is certainly easy to minimize both the importance of personal and social history for personal and communal development and salvation, as well as the strength with which the Christian must commit himself to the transformation of this world. This is a danger that is reinforced if personal incorporation into the sacrifice of the Lamb is understood in a unilateral way, as a kind of invitation to passivity in the face of injustice and worldly challenges. But clearly the latter is not applicable to Balthasar's theology. Despite his emphases, he never forgets the importance of social commitment. We have already seen this in his measured - for some surprising - support for *liberation theology,* which he repeats on another occasion: "The vocations and charisms which the glorified

Lord confers on the Church (Eph 4:7) [...] can range from the quietest life of contemplation [...] to very visible political and economic action for social justice in the world. The struggle for the latter (as called for by 'liberation theology') is an essential part of the tasks of the Church in the world, tasks which, together with others, make her the *Sacramentum mundi*" [= sacrament of the world][479] . And we can also see this in his identification of the virtue of hope with love, and in his support for the social aspect of hope; or in his recognition of the current importance of the preferential option for the poor: "Something that is absolutely central to Christianity is emerging [in South America]: the option for the poor. And we can no longer overlook this. But it has to be '*l'Évangile d'abord*', the Gospel first. It must be a Christian understanding of the poor [...] I see great possibilities for it if it achieves what other theologies lack and what South American theologians perceive, overcoming a theological thinking that is too theoretical"[480] . However, it is true that this intramundane concern sometimes appears somewhat diminished by the strong criticism of intrahistorical messianisms. However, when read correctly, they can still have a positive interpretation in our sense: the Christian fights for this present and historical society -as an evangelical mandate-, but this struggle is not the definitive one, but is framed in a previous and deeper one: the struggle of the Lamb. In synthesis, in all this argument there is always a danger that, as a possibility - not as a fact - is also present in Balthasar'*s Theodramatics*.

A second theme arises precisely from his critique of "transcendental theology", whose most exalted representative is Rahner[481] . There it seems that Balthasar would deprive non-Christian religions of all value. Today this is a particularly critical point. Indeed, he does not recognize them as theological "characters", as such[482] , but this does not mean that he does not grant them any value, but rather that he unifies them as a *whole* with respect to (and in the face of) Christianity. And with that what he tries to do is above all to emphasize the importance and the distinction -of level- of Christianity with respect to all the other religions; but he does not minimize them in terms of the fragmentary value they possess as a preparation for the

Gospel. In any case, this is a theme that has continued to develop in contemporary theology after the publication of the *Theodramatica* and, in this sense, it is true that its reflection on the subject can still be better developed. For this very reason, in this topic we must keep Balthasar's proposal within the margins that he himself gave it: simply within the desire to show the *uniqueness* of Christ in the face of the rest of the religions, and this, today and yesterday, is indispensable. This does not mean minimizing the value of others, but rather maximizing the value of Christianity. Now, on this point it is true that Balthasar is theologically "intransigent", and he demonstrated this in several of his tremendously biting and exaggeratedly harsh works[483] . The criticism should rather be made - and rightly so - of his harshness and intransigence, but not of his underlying point. Although it is also a subject on which contemporary theology has made progress after Balthasar.

Finally, as a counter-argument of balance to what has been said, it must be emphasized that Balthasar, in all his Christology, starting with the exquisite reflection on the conscience of Jesus - a topic about which we will speak below[484] -, which allows the incarnate Word to be *truly* human, in spite of being the Word of God; and then all his reflection on human freedom as *self-possession;* shows us with great clarity and strength his profound concern for the freedom of the human being, both of Christ and of all of us. In this way it is not possible to accept the criticism that everything is already determined or that what happens historically is unimportant. This would be to misunderstand Balthasar, one of whose essential points lies precisely in the freedom of the human being as the fruit of God's love, which is a consequence of God's Trinitarian being. As we have seen in the chapter on the Trinity[485] , a good understanding of his Trinitarian reflection explains well why the profound intervention of God in history takes nothing away from human freedom and, therefore, from the multiple possibilities of the historical development of the world. Perhaps many of these criticisms come from not having understood his Trinitarian doctrine with all the necessary depth, or from the same criticism of his Trinitarian understanding.

V. Human life of the Word made flesh

As we advance in the development of Balthasar's various arguments, aspects begin to appear which in some way had already been considered before, but which must now be treated a little more closely. It is therefore impossible to completely avoid some repetition. All in all, this reveals two methodological things: (1) that the different chapters of this book complement each other, and in that light they should be read; and (2) that Balthasar has elaborated a quite accomplished theological system, in such a way that to properly understand one argument, it is always necessary to take into account the others as well. And we know that this is Balthasar's method, which originates from the "*Gestalt*" of Jesus. In particular, in this chapter on his (fundamental) Christology, we must take into account what was said in chapter I -on the glory- and in chapter II -on the Trinity-, in addition to what we will say in the following chapter on soteriology.

It is clear that at various points in the *Trilogy* we find the development of various themes of Christology (e.g., the form of Christ [*Gloria* I], the glory in Christ [*Gloria* VI], man in Christ [*Theodramatics* III], the soteriological action of Christ [*Theodramatics* IV], Christian "Christological" eschatology [*Theodramatics* V], the truth of God [*Theology* II], as the most explicit moments). But here we will focus only on what we could call a "fundamental Christology". After briefly introducing the Christological theme, showing the centrality of Christ in the work of salvation, Balthasar approaches, from different angles, three themes that aim to explain our faith in Jesus as the Christ: (1) from a hermeneutical point of view, the method of Christology; (2) how the Word of God can be understood as becoming *flesh*; (3) and how a *human* life of the Word made flesh can be given, concretely and historically; and (4) how the Word made flesh can be given *human* life.

Christ, center of everything

Balthasar begins his *Theodramatics* III by showing that Christ is the *concretissimum, the* center of the drama, in which all the other characters are included. That is to say, in Christ the whole of creation and history is founded and, therefore, in him the meaning of the human being and of his existence is clarified[486] , since he was "freely sent by God 'from above'" as the ultimate foundation of creation, which "must be raised up entirely 'from below'"[487] . This shows us that the whole Christological doctrine is based on the union of the divine and the human in his concrete person; and hence also the difficulty of this topic. It is precisely in this concrete life that aspects that seem irreconcilable must be united: divine freedom to "descend" from the Father *with* historical human dependence; and "the intuitive knowledge of the Father *with* the concealment of an exemplary human 'faith'", among others[488] . Somehow must be a concrete example of the relationship between infinite freedom and finite freedom, as seen in the chapter on anthropology, and which Balthasar himself developed in *Theodramatics* II. And all this must be realized in the concrete and historical life of the man we know by the name of Jesus. Three reasons illustrate that Jesus is the center of the drama, that is, the axis of history, according to our faith in him.

a. With the coming of Christ something fundamental in history has occurred, and it is without turning back:

> In man has been deposited a ferment that comes from the absolute, which thus broke the bond of humanity to cosmic nature and gave him a freedom, and with it an element of absoluteness that he still retains as a gift of Christ .[489]

This was precisely the claim of Jesus, clearly visible in his self-awareness, in the sense that with him came the reign of God, as the unique and definitive action of God and the center of all the religious history of the world. Although it is not possible to make an intrahuman calculation of the effects of Christ's action, what is important is that with him history changed definitively. Although not everyone will be converted, he has called everyone. That is why "both Paul and John affirm the inclusion of creation, of history and of all men, in Jesus Christ"[490] .

b. The inclusion of all humanity in Christ means that, "in Christ, God has opened up that personal space of freedom" within which

individual and collective persons receive their destiny - their vocation and mission - to be lived and developed in an adequate way[491] . Thus arises "a kind of *circumincessio* [= mutual interiority] between the first and the second Adam, between the order of creation and that of grace and redemption": everything is recapitulated in Christ[492] . This implies that God has established his reign, but not by creating a new humanity, but by leading to its perfection and fulfillment that same humanity (Adam) that had been intended by God and for God from the beginning. This mystery, although it was present from the beginning as a creational will, has nevertheless been equally and always a grace freely offered and freely accepted. This means - theologically speaking - that Christ, although he is the alpha and omega of all creation and, therefore, its foundation; nevertheless, in the face of human freedom, he can never impose himself automatically, but only propose himself.

c. Christ and Christology have their origin exclusively in "the biblical witness" and not in some "previous religious or philosophical speculation", because Jesus Christ "cannot be invented by men" but, once manifested, can only be accepted (or rejected). Sacred Scripture leaves no possibility to conjecture any other form of divine action than what has historically occurred as God's free plan:

> His public life is the announcement of the kingdom of God. His cross is the victory over death through death itself and therefore the opening of the transition from the passing life to eternal life. His resurrection is the possibility of a personal following and sending on the basis of justification and "acceptance as sons" in his person . [493]

This means that Christology cannot be deduced, but only has to be reflected upon as given; and only from the realized event can we seek now its conditions of possibility, and understand its internal articulation and meaning. This will become clearer when we look at Balthasar's Christological method.

The method of Christology

When Balthasar deals with *The Problem of Method, he* proposes four fundamental methodical criteria, which have as a common characteristic the presentation of polarities, indispensable for understanding the phenomenon that is Jesus: 1. Overcoming the

diastasis between historical science and the interpretation of history. 3. Profound relationship between dogmatic Christology and biblical eschatology. Thematic transpositions as a structuring criterion for the New Testament.

Relationship between content and testimony

The first criterion is central -and extraordinarily important in Balthasar- and points to the core of his critique of the historical-critical method, as we have already had the opportunity to reflect. He summarizes it in an opening paragraph:

> Christology is constructed in an elliptical way already from its sources, since the testimonies of the early Church about Jesus of Nazareth are testimonies of faith. According to them, (paschal) faith opens the inner eyes to contemplate what the one to whom testimony is given really was. Between the witnessed content and the witnessing form there is a perfect reciprocity: apostolic preaching invites us to enter by faith into the group in order to perceive in its truth, even as the truth without further ado, the Word of God made flesh that engenders faith, and a faith that bears witness to it. Critical research has taught us to see how far the reciprocity of both poles goes: the exposition of the Christ-event is to such an extent determined by its object that the object in its turn is determined by this exposition; the faith of the disciples would not be faith if it were not aware of being totally configured by its content; but it cannot but apprehend this content with its own organ, contributing to conform it and perhaps to over-form it . [494]

In this dense and important passage, which assumes completely (and in a very positive way) the findings of the historical-critical method, Balthasar points to an essential element of his theological aesthetics: the relationship between perception and form, expressed here in the relationship between the event of Christ (form) and the faith of the community (perception)[495] . This means that it is only possible to understand who Jesus is -truly and authentically- starting from faith -because it is also a way of knowing-, but that this faith, far from distorting the historical event, on the contrary, discovers in it its deepest meaning. To this end, Balthasar devotes a few pages to recalling how the different Christologies, ancient and modern, have always been under such a Christological ellipsis. Working in different ways and with different results, none of them has been able to dispense with these two moments. Thomas , for example, when he compares "the 'light of faith' (which is what makes understanding possible)" with "the natural light of the *intellectus agens* [= intellect

that puts into action]" (which makes natural knowledge possible)[496] ; or Schleiermacher -from the Protestant perspective-, when he affirms that in front of the preaching about Jesus one enters into contact, both with the concrete historical personage (Jesus of Nazareth), and with "the prototypical person that is announced behind that preaching [the person fulfilled by God], the one who finds himself in a direct and historically effective relationship with the one who encounters him today in the community"[497] ; or even Rahner -from the Catholic perspective-, "with its correlations, due to methodological requirements, between theology in general and anthropology (always at the Christological central point), between economic and immanent trinity, between anthropology (as deficient Christology) and Christology as (super) plenified anthropology", where one statement is a condition of possibility for the understanding of the other .[498]

However, the most important issue for Balthasar is to show that his own approach, which is certainly elliptical - epiphanic form and faith of the believer - can survive, and even be enriched, by the new approaches of the historical-critical method. Balthasar has practically dedicated all of *Glory* I to the relationship between the subjective evidence of faith and the objective evidence or form of revelation. For this reason, in *Theodramatics* III, he only takes up a couple of ideas that he wants to reinforce, and which have to do directly with our theme. 1. "All the above-mentioned ellipsis-christologies are committed Christologies, that is, they presuppose the act of faith" and, therefore, there are no "written sources on the Jesus phenomenon that are not committed, that are neutral and 'without presuppositions' in the modern sense of the expression"[499] . The Gospels themselves are writings of faith, as can be seen in the formation of a tetraform Gospel. The attempt to distinguish clearly between a post-Easter kerygma and a hypothetical pre-Easter Jesus (with little result), makes this historical Jesus an irrelevant "character" for the faith[500] . Hence, the whole challenge of Balthasar's Christology -in the theme we are studying here- is that, after the pertinent historical-critical biblical analyses, he can continue to apply the concept of *form* to Jesus adequately, and with meaning and usefulness for faith. This is a theme

that also crosses the whole of Balthasar's *Trilogy*.

Overcoming the diastasis between historical facts and interpretation of history.

The two words used by Balthasar on this topic are: *Historie* and *Geschichte,* which could be translated, respectively, as "history" and "historical repercussion." And he explains their difference:

> *Historie* is historical science that works rigorously and accurately, but whose results remain hypothetical; *Geschichte* is the past that continues to have an impact on the present and is experienced on a vital level; it is obvious that it must be tested according to historical methods, but it is not history that ultimately decides on its validity . [501]

The understanding of two different things in these two apparently univocal words arises with the irruption of that attempt to find a scientific "'neutrality' in the commitment presupposed by theology"[502] . But is it really possible to make this distinction and think that there are objective facts without interpretation or interpretative effects? Balthasar answers from a text by Harald Riesenfeld[503] , who affirms "that the character of decision belongs to the objective and adequate method of investigation"[504] . Indeed, for that author, the most important question with regard to the understanding of the story of Jesus, apart from Jesus' own self-awareness, is the question of what really had to happen for such an event as the explosion of faith of the post-Easter community to have taken place and, along with it, the tremendous influence that has come down to us. This can only be explained by the force of a truly imposing personality. So, although the image received today is the fruit of the reflection of the Church that has transmitted it, the image contains an intuition that must have been born of indesmentible attitudes and feelings in Jesus. And this cannot be separated from the creative self-consciousness of Jesus himself, which made him act in a way that impressed his contemporaries. The history of religions shows that such phenomena are not invented, but are always linked to concrete persons. So it can only be their own impulse that gave rise to subsequent history in all its power and particularity. In this way it can be concluded that in the historical facts are incorporated internally those feelings and that interpretation, where it is not possible to separate facts from

interpretation. Balthasar develops this fundamental idea in three successive steps, which illustrate, deepen and complement what has been said, in order to show more clearly - in the concrete case of Jesus - the unity between history and its interpretation. He does so, as always, by reviewing a good part of the literature of the 19th and 20th centuries, in order to draw his own conclusions, indicating also his criticisms.

1. The 19th century was conducted within the scheme of Schleiermacher, whose thought understands "an ellipse that has one pole in the personality of Jesus lived historically in a unique and unrepeatable way and as the prototype of a man fully penetrated by God, and the other in the devout consciousness of the man in the Church who experiences this consciousness of his as the effect of that historical cause"[505] . This schema, which can be understood in many ways - also appropriately - finally led to the conclusion that what was important in the historical Jesus was not the details of his life, but his "total impression" (Schleiermacher); it also converged in the affirmation that what is important is the *present* encounter "*and in itself evident"* of that "overwhelming force of the intimate personality of Jesus" with the believer, who is struck by Jesus and led to faith (Herrmann)[506] ; and finally "the Bultmannian ellipsis between kerygma and existential faith" was reached, where "the historical Jesus is, like the pre-Easter Jesus, only one aspect of the total reality of Christ, of the Lord now glorified and living in the resurrection and as such proclaimed and understood by the disciples after Easter"[507] . But here, however, such an ambiguity has finally been reached that it casts doubt on the existence of a historical *factum* [= fact], since it has been supplanted by a prototypical image, which has an impact on the believer's existential today, and which also renders an exegetical inquiry into the pre-Easter Jesus unnecessary . That is to say, there is a decided (insurmountable?) dissociation between what Jesus could have been and what the community *created* about him.

Faced with this challenge, it was necessary to enter into the theme of continuity and discontinuity between the pre-Easter Jesus and the post-Easter Jesus, always within the ellipses that accompany us: the

ellipsis of form and faith, and that of history and interpretation. So now, inevitably within the framework of the advances of historical-critical science, it is necessary to ask ourselves if it is possible to "access the pre-Easter Jesus through the post-Easter testimonies of faith". But it is not possible to access the historical Jesus without also considering the question of his self-awareness - which likewise can only be found reflected "in the faith documents of the first Christian communities" - since each person's self-awareness of himself is an essential part of his concrete historical reality .[508]

In order to respond to all this, Balthasar summarizes the advances of exegetical science in two fundamental affirmations, going through the literature that goes from E. Käsemann to M. Hengel and G. Delling. Firstly, what has been called "indirect" (Conzelmann) or "implicit" (Marxsen) Christology, namely, that "in the way of speaking and behaving, in the faith and sovereignty of Jesus"[509] there is a self-consciousness and thus such a novel content, that it is already a true proclamation; which left such a strong impression on the disciples, that it aroused already at that time the faith of the disciples and their following. There the continuity between the historical Jesus and the preaching of the Gospel has been shown. But, in addition, according to Hengel, it is clear that "between the death of Jesus and the fully developed Christology" of the Pauline letters, and even the pre-Pauline texts, there is too short an interval for the impressive development shown in Christology. In 10-16 years the idea of the pre-existence, the divine nature, the mediation in creation and the mission of the Son was elaborated[510] . Moreover, the disciples, a very short time after the death of Jesus, "used the most diverse OT schemes to interpret his doctrine and the paschal events", from which it follows that Jesus, already during his earthly life, "was not only understood, but also understood himself, as the full meaning of the word of God"[511] . This means that the theological understanding of Jesus (= Christology) begins with Jesus himself, and that only in this way can there be true continuity within the discontinuity between the time of Jesus and the post-Easter community. The literary form of the New Testament shows clear indications in this sense. And this allows us to rely on the data

received in the New Testament, since it is impossible to understand the subsequent development if Jesus - in his earthly life - did not already have for the disciples a salvific meaning proper to his person, which then derived in the proclamation of his person as savior. This now raises the question of what was then Jesus' true claim - which implies his self-consciousness - and how this self-consciousness relates to the post-Easter faith of the Church. The cardinal aspect is that this claim is totally related to his eschatological expectation , and there it is understood at its core. That eschatological waiting is then what indicates its true claim, and that is the issue that must be properly examined.

3. Now, this being a complex problem, Balthasar advances a synthesis and a personal solution. For him, two things are evident: (1) It seems clear that in Jesus both a uniquely future eschatology and a uniquely present eschatology intersect. There is a paradoxical confluence between a "kingdom present and come" and a "kingdom yet to come." (2) "One finds some logia that beyond any doubt attest to an expectation of a chronological character"[512] . For Balthasar, the latter has a residual character and has an easy solution. In fact, the different affirmations of Jesus, apparently contradictory, can be reconciled very well in the conscience of Jesus if we take into account the following two elements. (a) In Jesus there is a concentration of apocalyptic thought, expressed in an unheard-of claim to absolute authority, which is rooted in his person, that is, in the possession of a special mission. In this sense, in Jesus we cannot separate eschatology from Christology. If the reign of God has arrived with Jesus, then the presence of Jesus is already a time of eschatological salvation, which gives the affirmations that Jesus makes about the future a totally new and different meaning from that of Jewish hope. (b) But there is also an important number of affirmations that do not have any eschatological expectation, but are of a purely theological character[513] . They are ethical reflections, or about the holiness required to be incorporated into the reign of God, or they are affirmations about the paternity of God, or they manifest his condition as Son, etc. This means that Jesus thinks at all times about his hour, but continues

faithfully his mission, that is, he is always waiting for the arrival of the reign of God, but with the calm of someone who must live his mission in a duration limited only by death. And all this he lives in a harmony that shows no contradiction, since his words refer to different aspects and to different auditors -contemporary and/or future-. In other words, Jesus sees and announces the event of his life as a *whole,* which includes the coming of the kingdom of God as the end of this world and the change of the eon, but at the same time, in his truly human life, he leaves the realization of all this - and also the way to carry it out - to the Father and the Holy Spirit, who will unfold historically what is already clear in Jesus and in his preaching of the eschatological kingdom.

In short: Jesus expects for himself an end that means not only death, but also "the end of the world", and this undoubtedly has to do with the apocalyptic expectation. He even allows "some" to take an explicit part in it, although for everyone it is of the utmost importance. From the common apocalyptic expectation, his is distinguished in that with him what is expected has already arrived and has found fulfillment. For Jesus the "consummation" (Lk 13:32) is indivisible (as resurrection-parousia); but since from the point of view of the Church it is not immediately realizable, the post-Easter ramification is inevitable in it, which, from the point of view of the consummation, allows an insertion of the "time of the Church" in its duration. It is necessary to warn against the attempts to parcel out this interweaving in the biography of Jesus and to construct accordingly a succession of moments in his consciousness: mission, understanding of his death, evolution in his eschatological thought . [514]

Unbreakable relationship between exegesis and dogmatics

We have already reviewed this third methodical criterion in the previous chapter[515] , and stated in synthesis that the figure of Jesus was so surprising and novel that already during his own life and after his Passover, ways were sought to understand it from a biblical language and content that would explain the phenomenon that was occurring. This means that the life of Christ -from the beginning- was united to a Christological dogma and only through it is his real identity and true meaning understood. Here, however, something else must be said. For Balthasar, from the awareness of Jesus himself that with him a definitive and salvific intervention of God in the history of humanity would take place, his "giving himself for us" is also included in his own identity, that is, the doctrine of redemption. Indeed, if in

the Old Testament two united aspects coexist, that is, "the initiative of a God with a reconciling will and the cooperation of man" in sacrifices and penance, in order to demonstrate that the relationship with God had the character of a covenant, and if in the New Testament this covenantal relationship is the same as in the Old Testament, that is, "the initiative of a God with a reconciling will and the cooperation of man" in sacrifices and penance; And if in the New Testament this characteristic is not attenuated, in spite of the fact that God takes upon himself the entire initiative[516] ; then the fact that God donates and gives a means of atonement - the Son of his love - means that in the heart of God there is a drama, where the "anger" that he must reprove and the "mercy" that he wants to forgive fight against each other. But, in addition, the giving of the Son into the hands of sinners, on the one hand, is the giving of something that is divine to the human part of the covenant and, on the other hand, it is the Son himself - as true man - who in this being given gives himself humanly. Here the reconciler is God, but he is so in the one who has given himself to us, the Son, who in turn has made himself definitively in solidarity with mankind. Thus the term "representation" (or vicariousness) is essential in the understanding of Jesus, and with it, it is also part of biblical Christology (= dogmatics). And this concept implies the inclusion of humanity in Christ because the life of Christ intimately affects the persons over whom he takes his place. Christology is thus integrally both exegesis and dogmatics.

Thematic transpositions

The fourth methodological criterion is thematic transpositions. By this is meant the fact that - or the question of the legitimacy of the fact that - what occurs in one context must or can be applied in another context. This is best understood, concretely, when we ask ourselves, for example, if a "following" or a "discipleship" of Jesus after his death, as proposed by the community, is valid; or if it is valid to put into the mouth of the pre-Easter Jesus words that are clearly those of the Risen One. For Balthasar, all this is not only valid, but even more, it is "a positive structural law" of the New Testament, since "according to his [= the NT's] understanding, in each historical phase

of the revelation of God in Jesus the whole Word of God is present"[517] . Then as the whole is present in every part, it is necessary to show that this whole is present in every historical moment, and from there "it is legitimate that what Jesus did, lived and expressed by his attitudes, experiences a transposition into 'word in word form' (as is suggested for example for some of the words said on the cross)". This is further based on the identity of the pre- and post-Easter subject and on the fact that what had not been understood before was nevertheless present, and therefore must be expressed in some way. "Thus it becomes clear that transpositions in the internal form of ecclesial preaching are indispensable, precisely insofar as they take place in the Holy Spirit"[518] .

In this way, the transpositions with regard to discipleship are understandable and legitimate, that is, that after Easter the following of Jesus is transformed-for example, in Paul-into imitating Jesus, becoming identical with him, allowing oneself to be transformed by him. It is not a repetition of the life of Jesus on earth, but to be existentially conformed to him. It is the same form of discipleship, but adapted to the new time. It is also legitimate and understandable that, faced with the presence of the risen Jesus -which is already a first act of the *parousia*-, the expectation of the definitive *esjaton* cannot be only future -because in it there is something that is already present-, then, given that the point of synthesis is clearly Christological -because he is precisely the one who is present and risen-, we can live moving towards the future, but with the certainty of already being saved. Thus, the imminent expectation of the parousia is transformed into an existentially permanent expectation and a life "in Christ".

More complex are the "projections on the pre-Easter events [of] the self-consciousness and [the] way of acting of the Risen One"[519] . This was developed in *Gloria* VII, and we mentioned it in the first chapter[520] , so here we will dwell only on the conclusion to which Balthasar arrives. For him, the transposition of motives carried out by the post-Easter Church was indispensable, since what was implicit in the consciousness of Jesus now simply had to be made explicit. This is theologically justified, since with the resurrection of Jesus the two

eschatological moments of "already" and "not yet" were transformed into a unity, so that they had to be announced as a unity.

> This means that the change of *Sitz* [= place] that the words of Jesus and his parables undergo from his life to the life of the Church could only shift their meaning in an *analogical way,* and that this shift was no extrinsic provisional expedient, but happened by an internal logic . [521]

It does not change the meaning, but rather develops its possibilities and fulfills its core. This analogy is based on the fact that, if Jesus "lived proleptically facing his own hour" and, moreover, called the disciples to follow him - even though they "could not follow him directly in this hour" - then a true analogy is imposed between the imminent waiting of Jesus and the present waiting of the Church: be vigilant! "watch and pray!" is proper to Jesus .[522]

Finally, the multiplicity of New Testament theologies, in the face of the unity of the event of salvation in Christ, is completely understandable because, if "the total meaning of a purely human life cannot be exhaustively expressed in a single biography," how much more so can the life of Christ not be expressed in a single word, especially if it must also include his resurrection. In fact, Jesus is not only a human expression, but the self-expression of God; moreover, he is authentically understood only from the resurrection and from faith, all of which cannot be understood from closed concepts[523] . For this reason, the theology of the New Testament must necessarily be plural, and only the sum and the harmonious whole of all of them can offer an adequate image of who Jesus is. The plurality of explanatory reflections are simply a reflection of the diverse messianic expectations of the Old Testament, which are then taken up by the different Christologies of the New Testament, since all of them have been assumed and transcended in a new and ineffable way in the one and only surprising Christ.

The Word became flesh

Balthasar devotes the last 100 pages of *Theology* II to reflect on the fact that the Logos has truly become one like us, that is, to try to understand the formula "the Word became flesh." He does so on the basis of three aspects: (1) the flesh as the corporeal; (2) all that is

implied in God (the Logos) *having become* something other than what he is; and (3) the fact that he has assumed a flesh similar to that of sin.

What does the flesh of the Word mean

For Christianity this is such an obvious reality that it is often not sufficiently considered "how incomprehensible this fact is":

> The Christian religion is the only one that, overcoming the fact of the mortality of the flesh - which has forced all other religions to spiritualization as the only possible way of salvation - has found the insurmountable end of the way of God in the flesh, in the mortal, Eucharistic, mystical, resurrected flesh. It is this concrete, highly problematic man, installed and sunk in his carnality: it is he and no other who is in God's sights, with whom God wants to become one, to become truly "one flesh" (Gen 2:24; Mt 19:5 par.; Eph 5:30-32) . [524]

Indeed, for Christianity, the flesh has been transformed into an instrument of salvation, so that the flesh has received a new dignity. Tertullian said it with his usual precision: *caro salutis est cardo* [= the flesh is the hinge of salvation] (*De carnis resurrectione* 8,3). But before reflecting on this fact, it is important to understand what *flesh* properly means and, especially, what flesh means in Jesus himself. Five perspectives provide a more complete answer.

1. In the Old Testament, "'flesh' is fundamentally man who, in his contingency, but also in a surprising grandeur within the world [...] stands before the Creator God"[525] . This means that the human being is in a relationship of dependence with respect to God, but also, that he or she is out of date and in need of others in order to live. In Paul, on the other hand, flesh means the whole human being, but in his tendency against God. And in John, in tune with the Old Testament, "'flesh' is, in a totally neutral way, the man created by God who stands before God in his contingency and sexed condition"[526] . Therefore, biblically we can say that "'the Word became flesh' means 'that God, as the one who reveals himself, assumed the form of man and did not wear it merely as a garment, but identified himself with it, so that those born of God might see the *doxa* of the Father' (Schweizer)"[527] .

2. Next, Balthasar asks why the Word became - justly - *flesh*. His answer is clear: to restore the fallen flesh, but also because everything is ordered to Christ as head of the world. In other words, the

incarnation has an aspect of restoration and another aspect of fulfillment. This deserves even more explanation. If in the Old Testament the flesh was understood above all as something weak and mortal, and in extra-biblical philosophy we could even find a dualism between flesh and spirit; when the Word of God has united with the flesh, a new and marvelous light has fallen upon it, in spite of the constant Christian temptations to assume dualistic understandings. In this sense, Irenaeus has been clear in showing that the flesh (= the human being with all his corporeality) is the center of the cosmos, since it has been shaped by the hands of God - the Son and the Spirit - and is therefore made with the art of God. But, in addition, the flesh filled with the Spirit of God becomes radiant and filled with the strength of God. Thus God shows himself strong precisely in the weakness of the flesh: for he does not do away with the flesh, but endows it with the qualities of the Spirit[528] . Flesh means the human being, who can never cease to be flesh, therefore - in this theology of Irenaeus - it is clear why the Word became flesh: so that man, without ceasing to be what he is, can resemble God and be with God. He does not need to abandon his corporeality - something that is proper and essential to him - in order to draw near to God. And all this is based on the fact that in the cosmos every reality is always apt to be assumed by a superior reality and there to fulfill itself, that is, it is as it were at the disposal of a superior in a kind of offering. Thus, matter is disposed for life and life is disposed for the spirit. So,

> man, insofar as he is the product of the sacrificial process of nature, must at the same time be dispositionally open for the insertion of the divine difference - specifically: the self-surrender of the Son according to the will of the Father through the Holy Spirit - without being able to be in this disposition more than *potentia oboedientialis* [= docile capacity] .[529]

The incarnation, in its deepest aspect, is the fulfillment of the human being, because all flesh has been predestined to it since creation.

3. But in the *Word* made man, the flesh also signifies a certain contrariety, in the sense that the Word "contradicts the 'flesh' that closes itself to the Word"[530] . The flesh that is hardened and does not want to see, cannot understand either. And if "Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh and was passively exposed to sin," then "the language of the incarnate Word and the language of the flesh are

mutually incomprehensible" and appear as adversaries[531] . Since we will return to this topic a little later, it is enough to say here that all this means for Jesus an incomparable solitude, because his words are not understood. Jesus appears among men as just another man, where people are reluctant to do their part to understand him, which is precisely to "listen". Hence the loneliness of Jesus and the incomprehension between Word and flesh.

4. Since the flesh is so much a part of the human being, Balthasar wonders whether it is possible to think of something like a transcendental expectation for the flesh. For example, at the end of the Old Testament something like a hope of "being saved together with God" is imposed[532] . This is a theme that has been present in Catholic theology. It is well known that Rahner speaks "of a 'transcendental hope of resurrection'", since "every man wants to affirm himself in the definitive". Then "the experience of transcendental expectation of the hope of one's own resurrection, attainable from the essence of man, is the horizon of understanding within which one can hope for and experience something like a resurrection of Jesus"[533] . But for Balthasar this "seems an irresponsible anticipation", since - first of all - this transcendental project of the resurrection cannot not be "in connection with something like a transcendental project of the cross, the only reality, in fact, from which the resurrection becomes possible". And it is not clear that there is such a transcendental project of the cross, from which a resurrection becomes possible for someone who is "flesh." Indeed, "for the cross of Christ there is no transcendental precomprehension that can be halfway credible." Even though the worldly being has a "sacrificial character" "in all its degrees, to the maximum in man"; and even though "in the idea of 'surrender'" to the other, based on the common matter of all being, the conception of vicarious substitution was outlined. However, all this can receive concreteness *only* from the unrepeatable destiny of Jesus, destiny of perfect earthly failure of his mission limited to the flesh[534] . Therefore, the idea of a transcendental hope of resurrection, before the depth of the guilt of the world carried on the cross is eliminated, does not seem possible. Hence it is not

surprising that Jesus was neither recognized nor welcomed - by the great majority - during the time of his public life, because his message "does not announce precisely that which the incomplete man in the 'flesh' longs for in the deepest part"[535] . Clearly Balthasar's starting point is different from that of a transcendental expectation for the flesh.

5. A final characteristic of the flesh-which Balthasar is interested in highlighting here-is that fundamental human experience of the impossibility of accomplishing much of what has been planned and hoped for, and with it the common sense of the futility of one's own effort. Although we cannot have a full understanding of Jesus' conscience, it is clear that he also experienced "the awareness of the futility of his effort" (Mt 11:16f.)[536] . In the synoptics we perceive well how Jesus experienced both the failure to fulfill his earthly mission - in terms of gathering the scattered children of God's people - with , and also suffered the deep opposition of the people. Hence, fulfilling his hour will be for him something like "a journey towards extreme futility", "and at the same time towards a 'fulfillment' (Jn 19:30) of what is possible for him and determined by the Father, to whom he abandons himself even when the Father has abandoned him". From here we can affirm three things, internally united in Jesus: 1. "The awareness of having remained in obedience until that end in the way predetermined by the Father"; in such a way that on reaching the passion, both an extreme failure and an extreme awareness of being fulfilled were given together and incorporated one into the other. 2. "Extreme distancing from the Father and, in the fulfillment of the mission, to walk ultimately towards him, even into him". It is "the paradox of every Christian mission"[537] . 3. "The will of the Father, through that of the Son", "goes to a love that is poured out to infinity: the Holy Spirit". The Holy Spirit is the "expression of their common" desire for love. Thus, Jesus has total trust in the Father, to whom he entrusts his failed mission on earth. And the Father, with the sending of the Holy Spirit, will know how to make fruitful and fulfill the mission that he has accomplished in failure. The resurrection is not only something of his body, but it is also the resurrection of his

mission .[538]

Becoming what is not God

Balthasar starts from the *fact* that the Logos has become flesh. "All theology depends absolutely on the believing acceptance of [this] unique *factum*"[539] . However, theological and dogmatic affirmations cannot claim to exhaust the fact, since they are only reflections on the basis of faith in this *factum*. This is the "fundamental starting point of all Christian faith and is dogmatically preserved by the protective declarations of the great ecumenical councils"[540] . Balthasar tries to understand this *factum* from five aspects.

1. The first aspect - which is evident - is the fact that the Word became flesh - which we know by faith and because it has in fact been realized - necessarily presupposes the will of the Logos, indeed, the Trinitarian will that the Logos come incarnate into the world. It can have no other origin than the desire of the Logos to "divest himself"[541] , that is, the ultimate initiative does not come from man, but from God's will of self-giving to humanity. This is very important for Balthasar because - now following Rahner -

> this man is, precisely as man, in his self dispossession, the self dispossession of God, because God manifests himself precisely when he *dispossesses himself,* makes himself known as love when he hides the majesty of love and shows himself as the vulgarity of man.... The "what" is in us and in him the same; we call it human nature. But the fact that this what is said in him as his self-expression and not in us constitutes the abyss of diversity [...] If God himself becomes man and remains man in eternity, ... all theology remains eternally anthropology and man is forbidden to think contemptuously of himself, for if he did he would think contemptuously of God . [542]

This means that God has become exactly what we are, and this has given humanity a new dignity and a deeper meaning. There is no longer any opposition between divine and human, even if the difference always remains. But it is also important to affirm that this was not primarily a human achievement, but a self-gift, a becoming, a kenosis of God, completely free and unexpected. And as we have already mentioned above, the possibility of such a human kenosis of the Word is based on the previous kenosis of the Father, who divests himself in order to give all his divinity to the Son, who is then that same divesting, and therefore can then divest himself - for us -

because his essence is to be donation.

2. Having accepted the fact and its significance, Balthasar -like Rahner - advances in his reflection: if the Word *became* -devino- flesh, the following question now arises: "can God become something?". The answer is not easy and presents enormous philosophical challenges. But here - once again - ontology, in its reflection, must be aided by the message of faith, and not the other way around. If, as the Bible teaches us, "the Logos became man," and that means that the life of that man Jesus is "his own history" [= of the Logos], then it "simply follows: God can become something, the immutable in himself can be mutable *himself in another* (Rahner)"[543] . Given the theological - and factual - fact that the Word assumed flesh in the man Jesus, it is clear that, although the Word of God - as such - cannot change his divine condition of Word, he can become "something else", that is, he can become human; not by modifying himself in his divinity, but by assuming something other than himself (humanity). And he does so by making that humanity something proper to him: it is now *his* humanity. In this sense he becomes - becomes - something else: he was God and without ceasing to be God, he is now also man, he becomes man.

Now, for this to be understood in all its reality and with all its radicality, Balthasar turns again to Adrienne von Speyr , who in her text *Objective Mysticism*[544] , speaks of the apprenticeship of the Logos in order to become true man. Indeed, the letter to the Hebrews speaks of "the person of the Logos himself, who as God has to 'learn' (Heb 5:8) [...], which means to stand before the Father as man, to be neighbor and brother to all these creatures whose sinfulness away from God he learns to experience in a completely new way, in the osmosis of the one common human nature"[545] . Having to live as a creature is something new for the Logos. Thus - as Adrienne von Speyr states - he must learn what it means, as a man, to let another lead him and tell him what to do (e.g., to depend on his mother). "His human will will have limits, like all his human nature," so that this human will will will have to "permanently bear the worry [...] that this limited will will will always find itself at the center of the unlimited

paternal will"[546] . When the Word becomes man, like every human being, he must begin to experience himself historically. This is the ineffable mystery of the incarnation, and it deserves a much more detailed reflection . Balthasar has already done so in *Theodramatics* III (and we will review it in a moment). For this reason, here he only highlights two aspects that, besides being very complex, show the seriousness of the authentically human existence of the Word, which has not been a simple "playing" at being man. These are the issues of the relationship between human faith and the vision of the Father, and the relationship between human will and obedience and the divine condition of the Word.

If the Word of God has become man, then somehow in that unique subject two realities that seem incompatible must coexist: the unsuppressible relationship of the Word with the Father -which we call "vision of God"- and the experience of every man of his "faith" in God, whom he cannot see in this historical existence. Balthasar, knowing the complexity of the subject and having already dealt with it in detail before[547] , turns here by way of explanation to some texts of Adrienne von Speyr . He resorts to several of her works[548] and gathers from it some affirmations that allow him to understand something of this mystery, where clarification can only come from the complement of diverse points of view - in the understanding that it will always be a mystery -, but that both things must be saved: that the Word be the subject, and that thus everything lives a truly human life in all its characteristics.

> The absolute measure is now the mission; the Son has "laid down" his divine form with the Father, "so that the Father may communicate to him from it exactly as much as the obedience of his earthly mission demands"; this does not mean, however, that all vision is withdrawn from the Son and that he, like us, "depends purely on human faith" to obey the Father [...] "Christian faith is in no way an impoverished vision, a pure 'not yet', a negative of the vision". The establishment of this Christian faith is the work of the Son made man; his prayer must now be realized in such a way "that he can communicate it to his brothers. He must experience in his human nature how a man understands himself with God". It is therefore something like a deposition, a muffling, a non-use of his divine vision; his prayer must flow from his becoming man .[549]

For Balthasar, the fundamental criterion for understanding the incarnation is the *mission* to be fulfilled by the Son who has been sent

in the flesh. Therefore, two fundamental elements are given here. First, that the Word has renounced his divine condition. This is what Paul has called kenosis, and what Adrienne von Speyr expresses with the idea that the Word "has laid down," or has left "in Heaven," or has deposited at the feet of the Father his divine condition - always understood as an act of love - in order to fulfill his mission as an authentic man. And, secondly, since the Word has renounced all *that is necessary* to be able to authentically fulfill the mission entrusted to him, then, the task that he must fulfill is the authentic criterion for the realization of kenosis. Accordingly, one of his resignations must be precisely his renunciation of the "vision of God" in everything that makes authentic human obedience impossible. Only in this way can the Word made man become a model of prayer and discipleship.

With all this, Balthasar does not claim to have understood exactly this great mystery, nor to have given a definitive solution to the subject, but he only wanted to indicate some aspects that must always be taken into account (and that are constantly in a polar tension) in a mystery that is certainly incomprehensible to us. And, moreover, since the incarnation is essentially a vital and dynamic human existence - and is therefore always in movement - the relationship of the incarnate Son with the Father necessarily takes place within that same human dynamicity, in such a way that the various aspects involved in it (e.g., faith, vision, etc.) unfold in a diversified way according to the existential and historical moment in which it is. Thus, in the subject we are reviewing, there is both room for the full awareness of this relationship, and at the same time it is lived in an authentically human way. But these two magnitudes are neither fixed nor equal, but are vital events that occur together, although each in its own place. And since the measure is always the mission, it is on this basis that it is decided in each historical moment what can be the vision of the Father and the way in which it is realized, reaching the extreme of "total abandonment" at the moment of the cross. The central point is that Jesus looked at the Father *from* and *through* the mission and in this there was always that aspect of having laid down before the Father his divine condition as a human response to the Trinitarian

generation of the Word.

4. With respect to freedom - the next theme that Balthasar studies - the same criterion and the same difficulty as above is given. It is evident that freedom is something proper to human nature and, therefore, Jesus, if he is truly man, must have true human freedom. The question is then how this true human freedom, which is assumed and guided by the divine person of the Word - due to the hypostatic union - can "continue to maintain a proper sphere of activity, if after all the Son did not come to do his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him (Jn 6:38)"[550] . Although we will return to this topic in a moment, here we must anticipate that, in Scripture, Jesus clearly possesses a will of his own, since this belongs to the essence of humanity: the capacity for choice and free will and, therefore, a space in which to develop this freedom. However, in order to better understand this freedom in relation to the will of the Father and the divine personhood of the Word, Balthasar adds two elements here. First: what appeared to Jesus as the will of the Father must have appeared to him as the supreme good for the world and for the human being, a good of such magnitude that it was up to him alone to give himself with all his freedom to achieve it, because it was precisely what he wanted to do - as a good that appeared to him. This harmonizes his own will with the will of the Father, since in perceiving something as a good to be achieved for all and for himself, this is identified with his own mission and, therefore, with his own identity. This is the only way to imagine the non-contradiction between both wills. And, secondly, freedom possesses an area called "fantasy", which is one's own initiative and creativity to develop precisely that which seems to him to be a good or, even, the will of another. This implies that Jesus had a wide field to decide how to fulfill the will of the Father .[551]

5. The incarnation was a Trinitarian decision, as stated in Eph 1:3-10,13-14: the Father "chose us" "before the foundation of the world" "to be his children" "in Christ," who, by becoming incarnate, redeemed us "by his blood" and whose work has been brought to fulfillment by "the promised Holy Spirit," who has been poured into

our hearts.

> Thus, the Trinitarian planned work, in which the incarnation of the Word constitutes the historical center, and the gift of the Spirit its eschatological fullness, can only be in itself a plan of Trinitarian dimensions. If it is thought that creation as a whole is in God and, therefore, between God and the world - however much the latter may have distanced itself from God - there is no distance, no other distance can be placed between the Father and the incarnate Son than that which exists between the divine persons in the unity of their essence and that which mediates between God and the creature in general. That is why the Father, in the incarnation of his Word, can remain in the gesture and in the state of the one who gives and offers immediately . [552]

If the work of salvation is the action of the whole Trinity, so is the incarnation. All three persons participate in it, although the one who is incarnated is only the Word. Indeed, when the Word became incarnate, he was still the eternal Son generated by the Father. And since generation is not a punctual act - which has already ended - but an eternal and present event, then in the present and incarnate presence of the Son the permanent and continuous generation of the Father is also being mysteriously realized, because otherwise the Son would not exist. This is possible because generation does not have a temporal dimension, but is coextensive with the entire life and existence of the Son; indeed, it coincides with the Son as his presupposition of existence. Therefore, in the very act of the incarnation the Father is also present, insofar as he is generating the one who is incarnated. The same is true of the Holy Spirit, who not only brings about the incarnation of the Son, but who at every moment accompanies Jesus, as the one who has anointed him and who testifies to him with his power. Therefore, the *factum* of the incarnation reveals the whole Trinity. But obviously this can be perceived only in the light of faith, which discovers in this event that is Jesus the presence and action of the whole Trinity. We are faced here with the fact that the authentic reality of Jesus can only be discovered from a Trinitarian perspective and, therefore, from faith.

> From the Trinitarian character of the incarnate Word, its unity is understood in the best possible way. The one who truly speaks is the Father, and just as in eternity he says everything that can be said in a single Word, so too in time, inasmuch as it is the time of that same Word, now incarnate .[553]

Everything that Jesus says-his words, his gestures and his life-are

summed up in the unity of the one Word of God. Therefore, in order to understand Jesus authentically, one must have in view the complete unfolding of his life, which also includes his relationship with the Father and the Spirit. Thus, each singular word of Jesus refers to the totality and this totality can be discovered from each of the words and gestures of Jesus. This is what is proper to a "form," as is the Word become flesh.

Finally, the incarnation cannot be rightly understood if it is considered as just another general relationship between God and creature - two tremendously distant magnitudes - but it is necessary to consider specifically the particular relationship of the Logos, who is God and with God identical, with his own human nature assumed from a decision of maximum freedom, and with which he has become equally identical. Now he, who is God, since he is the Word *of the* Father, explains in his humanity not himself, but the Father-in the Holy Spirit-with whom he is identical in nature and not in hypostasis. In the *flesh*, then, we must recognize the Logos, who, as such, is not the Logos of himself, but of the divine Father. The Word truly expresses God in his flesh. From faith we can perfectly understand that this explanation can only come from above and that it must be accepted as it is presented. Consequently, we must affirm that this flesh expresses not only the subject that appears, but the whole Trinity, because the hypostases only live in relation to one another.

Assuming sin-like flesh

This is the third major aspect that interests Balthasar with respect to the incarnation. Although he devotes a good number of pages to it in *Theology* II, it is a topic that, in terms of its soteriological consequences, he has already dealt with extensively in *Theodramatics* IV, and it is an argument that we will deal with explicitly and at length in the following chapter. But here it is of interest to mention briefly its relation to the incarnation itself. This is its approach:

> In his self-explanation in the flesh, the Logos exposes himself to the extreme; his light shines in a darkness that "does not comprehend it," which means, not a simple not knowing, but a not wanting to know. Jesus is the witness of the truth that he is; a witness is either believed or not believed. His manifestation of the Father in himself is his speaking, his diction; not to believe that he shows God is the contradiction that confronts him. And, since

he as absolute Word is also absolute truth, the contradiction facing him is also non-truth, the absolute lie . [554]

If we have said that the flesh indicates a certain contradiction with the Word, here he reflects directly on the consequences of this aspect of the incarnation. Two things seem to me especially important to emphasize, since they are particularly characteristic of Balthasar. The first, as we have read in the text just quoted, is to emphasize that the Word, in becoming flesh, submits himself to the possibility of being rejected, since he offers himself to human freedom by showing himself precisely in the non-divine. This means that he cannot "prove" what he says-that he is the manifestation of the Father-but only has to be believed. It is true that there are multiple concordant factors that point to his confirmation, but finally they must be accepted only with an act of surrender and obedience that is called faith. Thus, the fact that historically it has not been believed shows that the flesh was indeed a contradiction. But since what is revealed is God himself-the absolute-the contradiction to the absolute is also an absolute contradiction. For Balthasar, this contradiction is what St. John calls sin, that is, "denial of the one truth"[555] . Indeed, since the Word made flesh is the expression of the Father and the revelation of God's absolute love, "the non-acceptance of the testimony, unbelief, is what is immediately anti-divine, and insofar as Christ reveals divine love, what is anti-Christian"[556] . From this Balthasar deduces a kind of dialectic in this contradiction:

If in the background of the "truth" of Christ lies his untiring yes to the salvific will of the Father, which is evidenced in action through the giving of the Son, in the background of the unbelief of the "Jews," of their inability to understand the words of Jesus (Jn 8:43), lies the principle of the absolute non-absolute to this truth that is made present in Christ, a principle that stands in relation to this truth in a relationship that is not contrary, but "counter-dictatorial" in the literal sense. Partial truths can and must be completed by means of other contrary truths, in this lies the truth of Hegelian logic .[557]

But since the truth that Jesus expresses is the love of the Father, which is revealed through the sending of himself, then the non-acceptance of Jesus, which we can call a lie (as the opposite of the truth), is in reality the non-acceptance of the love of God. Therefore, that is a background opposition that does not allow any dialectic as a

transition to an integration. "The negativity of hatred and falsehood can in no way remain integrated into truth as a necessary moment of passage"[558] . Therefore, for Balthasar, every dialectical solution is insufficient. The only solution is Trinitarian, since only from the action of the Trinity - in Christ - has it been possible to assume and overcome the lie, and it was from the Logos who assumed the flesh in the form of sin. Indeed, God himself chose the means - completely unforeseeable for the world - of condemning the flesh through itself. Precisely, in assuming the flesh of sin, he takes to himself that flesh which is the enemy of God; but in doing so out of obedience to the Father, in that very act of obedient assumption and voluntary love, he empties it for that very reason of its hostility to God. And this must be carried to the extreme, so that nothing is left out. That is why the Son on the cross no longer receives any response from the Father, in such a way that everything must have appeared to him as useless, meaningless -including his absolute obedience-, so that without realizing it he bears within himself the maximum contradiction of sin, and overcomes it from within with his fidelity[559] . Hence the importance of having assumed the "flesh of sin".

The second thing to note is that, although Balthasar recognizes that this "dialectical" aspect of the mystery of the passion of Jesus has been treated by theology on various occasions throughout history, it can be found in the New Testament, for example, in the oppositions that both John and Paul see between grace and sin or faith and sin. For example, it can be found in the New Testament, in the oppositions that both John and Paul see between grace and sin or faith and sin. But they do not speak of dialectics, nor are they properly contradictions with both aspects on an equal footing. The one who has gone furthest, according to Balthasar, was Luther, who does reach a dialectic and a contradiction with opposing statements, which can be expressed as equally true: he is just and he is sinful or the exchange between Christ and humanity. "Now what is decisive [for Luther] is that both contradictions are thought of in a *purely formal way,* and also in a *purely formal way* they are equated with each other, so that each refers back to the other (which corresponds formally to *commercium),*

but also each only gets its form from the other."[560] . However, to Balthasar this seems insufficient, since "the *admirable commercium,* as the Fathers understood it, does not rest on a purely formal exchange of sin and grace, but on an obedience of the person of the human God to the Father, an obedience with which he was able to undermine the rebellion of the first Adam. The identity of this obedience is the that could resolve the contradiction between God and the sinner"[561] . On the other hand, it seems to him that "the doctrine of Adrienne von Speyr , which has probed and expressed these abysses [opened by Luther] as no one else has done before" has gone much deeper and thus "has given them a sufficient answer"[562] .

Based especially on the work *Cross and Hell*[563] (although not only on it), he devotes the last pages of *Theologica* II to synthetically expound this doctrine[564] . He affirms that when Christ descended into hell - according to what we profess in the Creed - he did not descend victorious, since the Sabbath is not yet the Passover, but he descended as a corpse, that is to say, as a word that no longer speaks. His feeling has been that of failure, that everything has been useless[565] . But at the same time, as the bearer of the sin of all human beings, it was a victorious descent, because sin was separated from man, in hell, by means of the cross. That is why hell is what is absolutely dreadful, what has been rejected, because it is what has nothing to do with God. Hell is the total opposite of heaven. It is absolute solitude, where neither communion nor hope is possible. So, as can be seen, the solution to these contradictions is only Trinitarian. In fact, the Father, for love of the world, withdraws a little from the world, so that the Son, with his obedience, can go through hell to the bottom[566] . Thus the obedience of the Son, in hell, is now "his perfect *identity* in all contradiction and, with it, the overcoming also of the ultimate contradiction by means of this all-pervading identity"[567] . It is the human expression of the hypostatic obedience of the Son, and this is nothing other than the execution of his mission, for which he became incarnate. So hell is transformed by the cross: where there was condemnation, now grace penetrates, and this opens the way to purgatory, as part of the judgment and mercy of God who purifies us

with his fire of love. We will return to this in the next chapter. Here it was only important to stress that all this is part of the incarnation itself. "All this 'doctrine' remains in many ways paradoxical, because at bottom it cannot be taught, at most it can be lived. Hence the silence of the Church on Holy Saturday."[568] .

Mission and person of Christ

This is a well-known theme, very characteristic and, in many ways, also new to Balthasar. His fundamental concern is to offer a better understanding of Christological dogma, free from that sort of monophysitism that has so subtly accompanied Christology from Chalcedon onwards[569] . It is a matter of determining and exposing the concrete and feasible way in which a true *human* life of the Word made flesh, with all the characteristics that are proper to the existence of every human being, could be given -authentically and historically-. The subject is not an easy one and, of course, it has also provoked critical reactions; but it seems to me that Balthasar has succeeded well in his task of explaining how it is possible for a divine person, without ceasing to be divine, to live an authentically human life, involving especially his human conscience and freedom . His explanation consists of two moments. First, starting from the New Testament affirmation of the Son as the one sent by the Father -that is, from the mission of Jesus-, he reflects on how this mission can be the criterion for realizing and understanding an authentic human life, since it implies the identity between person and mission in Christ: Jesus is a mission. And from there, secondly, he reflects on the Trinitarian and soteriological consequences of such an understanding of Jesus, which make the traditional dogma on the hypostatic union and the inclusion of all humanity in Christ more intelligible and adequate for a modern anthropology. Balthasar's reflection is complex and goes step by step. In the following, we present the main aspects (= steps) of this theology on the identity between person and mission in Christ.

Mission concept

From the biblical data we have mentioned above, where we could recognize "an eschatological and universal mission consciousness in

Jesus", which implied that he "must carry out the commission received that embraces creation as a whole, all of which presupposes not only a unique and unrepeatable mission, but also a unique and unrepeatable envoy", then we can "take the concept of mission as a hermeneutical thread" to understand who Jesus is[570] . This is Balthasar's basic approach. It is also based on the fact that, in the New Testament, whenever the Christ is described, his function is actually described; but from his function we can also deduce his being: who does he have to be for him to do and say such things? This is a Christology that we can call "from below," which inquires into the conditions of possibility of the person so that those actions could have been carried out with meaning and truth, and thus concludes in the affirmation of the divine and human characteristics of the Christ. Behind this lies the primordial fact that the mission or action of someone is naturally in intimate relationship with the personal identity, and in certain cases one can reach such an identification between the person and the mission that finally the two things are a unity, as is the case of the Son sent by God. It seems to Balthasar that this way of doing Christology, which is historical, from below and from anthropology, is more consistent with the historical character of every human being and, therefore, more adequate to arrive at a true understanding of who Jesus is, since it is born from "the anthropological data and those that have been given in the history of salvation". This type of Christology will have a better chance of being correct in its understanding than a Christology that would start, for example, from what theoretically are the human and divine essences and from there reflect on how their possible unity "should be", in order to then "deduce" how Jesus really must have been[571] . This was precisely the form and the limitation of neo-scholastic Christology.

The concept of mission is indeed central to the understanding of Jesus[572] . In the New Testament "the concept of mission referred to Jesus appears connected with his maximum qualification as 'Son of God'", which qualitatively distinguishes him from all the previous prophets[573] . We can see this, for example, in Paul: "God: sending his Son..." (Rom 8:3), with which he surpasses all the prophetic sending of

the Old Testament, since the one sent is the Son of God himself. Also in John "the idea of sending" "is at the center of Christology" and "expresses the Trinitarian as well as the soteriological constitution" of Jesus. And in the Synoptics: "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me" (Mt 10:40). Jesus himself says: "For this purpose I was sent" (Lk 4:43; Mt 15:24)[574] . "In this 'coming' is always expressed the messianic awareness of bringing with his person a definitive salvific event," which is the proclamation of the Good News and the invitation to sinners. But the fact of being sent or of having come, starting from the context and the reason for the sending (the salvific announcement of the reign of God), "can only have God as its point of departure," as John explains with perfect clarity: "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world" (Jn 16:28). For this reason, John, with the use of the concepts *apostellein, pempein*, which signify precisely the being sent by someone, extends the theme of "coming-from-God" to a "being-sent" by God. With all this "the unique character of the person of Jesus is expressed through the double uniqueness of his Trinitarian relationship with the Father and the soteriological objective of his mission"[575] .

After this brief and synthetic biblical journey, we can see that Jesus' mission implies an indissoluble bond between the Father who sends him and the Son who is sent -one cannot be given without the other-, and this mission develops in his life as obedience to the will of the Father, which can only be given within the Trinitarian gift of the Father to the Son. Thus, economically, the Father accompanies the entire life of the Son on earth. Therefore, his nourishment is to do the will of the Father. It is also clear that the mission is rooted in the internal procession, since, if he has been sent, then this presupposes having been with God already before being sent. John's Christology is but the development of what was already present in the Synoptics, and even before, of what Jesus was aware of about his mission and the one who sent him.

The mission implies a historical becoming in Jesus

We already know that Jesus had a clear awareness of his mission and

of his eschatological mission, but this mission had to be developed throughout his life, with his own history. What can this mean? Balthasar then takes the second step, which is to deepen the relationship between being and becoming in Jesus and in his mission. This is a theme that has several aspects, which are related to each other and which together illustrate well the historical character of Jesus.

1. *The Son assumes the becoming.* Whoever has received a mission, along with being aware that someone has given him that mission (because no one gives a mission to himself), if that mission is essential and absorbs "the whole existence (in a gradual way)", "can advance until reaching the identification of the being (personal) of the one sent with it"[576] . Already in the Old Testament when God called for an important mission, which had to involve the whole life, through that very thing the called ones came to discover that all their previous life was nothing but a preparation for that mission received. That is the meaning of the change of name: one has been transformed into a new person, starting from the new name (Abraham, Peter, John, etc.). "In the line of these identifications is, as the culminating and surpassing moment of all of them, the promise of the mission, addressed to Jesus and realized by the sender in the event of his baptism": "You are my Son"[577] . Now, as

> the whole person of the Son is engaged in his worldly work, and his whole human nature is found in all its phases and dimensions at the service of that work, for which he has been sent as the Son. And since a mission can only be brought to its consummation in a temporal course, and since precisely in the mission of Jesus the final phase, the "hour", has the greatest weight in the performance of the mission, there remains in his existence-mission a paradoxical unity of being (already-from-forever) and becoming .[578]

This means that the Son (who is God), as the subject who carries out that mission (= his person), being incarnated, is for that very reason in becoming as incarnated and, therefore, if he is now truly man -in mortal situation-, this implies that his unique relationship with the Father must necessarily be realized through the successive moments of his historical existence. Now, "if his mission was universal and concerned the salvation of the world as a whole"[579] , and therefore must go beyond what is possible in a merely mortal life, then the

doctrine of the two *statuses* [= situations or conditions] is well understood. This means that Jesus, who was one thing (of divine condition), has become another thing (slave situation), that is, he has lowered himself to assume the human condition (Phil 2:6-11). This implies three important affirmations[580] : (1) Jesus, in his state of abasement (*status exinanitionis*), must be conscious in some way - in a human way - of his eschatological and universal mission, and identify himself internally in a sublime way, as a person, with the mission that he carries out led by the Father. (2) The impossibility of accessing his previous - and subsequent - condition (*status exaltationis*) [= state of exaltation] implies that he had to leave - in full obedience to the Father - the definitive realization of the eschatological moment - the hour - to the Father and, therefore, to face failure while remaining faithful on the path along which the Father was leading him; all this as an essential and integral part of his mission. (3) "This person, in order to preserve his identity, must be a Trinitarian identity, that is, he needs the Father and the Spirit to be himself"[581] and, at the same time, the subject who is subjected to the *status exinanitionis* must be the same person who was and will be again in the *status exaltationis.*

2. *Knowledge and freedom proper to a human being in becoming.* To submit to the becoming of a properly human existence supposes also to assume a limitation in its "divine" knowledge, in order to adapt itself to what is proper to the human being. For Balthasar it is evident that "the theory of an omniscience of Christ experienced a hypertrophy in patristics [...] and in scholasticism", in such a way that Jesus was granted an omniscience that would correspond to his "dignity", "on the basis of his direct intuition of God and of his (super) prophetic inspiration", which was based on the writings of St. John, who unites the two *statuses* of Jesus and presents them as "reflecting each other"[582] . But all this doctrine did not take due account of the fact that Jesus' obedience - and his kenosis - implied a renunciation of knowledge that could be theoretically expected. On the contrary, it must be affirmed that, if it is proper to the perfection of the human being not to possess everything already realized, known and done, but to develop his potentialities gradually throughout life, then the

mission is also acquired and fulfilled with the gradual and free progress of life, which supposes in Jesus - as we have expressed it - both the distinction and separation of the two *statuses*, as well as making the mission the decisive criterion for attributing to him the knowledge that must be required. No beatific vision or infused science is required.

Regarding the knowledge that Jesus had about his own identity as Son of God (as the Abba testifies), it is something that Jesus possessed from the beginning, but in a human way and in relation to the mission; that is, he was aware of his identity as Son of the Father from the mission assigned to him, and he knew this identity and mission through the work of the Holy Spirit who announced it to him in an ineffable way. That is to say, the mission impels him and contemplation makes him live always in the mission. "The filial consciousness of Jesus is always (*unvordenklich*)[583] in a qualitatively unique sense, although inseparable from his mission consciousness." "In the awareness of *this* mission must be included the knowledge of his condition as Son", but that progressively became thematized, "both from the vital experience of Jesus and from the lanes marked by tradition"[584] . This last theme will become clearer in a moment when we speak of the conscience of Jesus.

As for freedom, the same criteria that we have just proposed for knowledge are repeated. This is a decisive point for Jesus to be considered a true human being. Jesus cannot be "the appearance of a divine (and therefore 'alien') decision that precedes his whole existence", where the only thing he must do "is to ratify in a second moment what has already been decided about him and about the world". That would disqualify him as a human being and despise the freedom created by God himself. On the contrary, Jesus' human freedom necessarily implies the capacity for personal decision in and of his own life[585] . Indeed, when it is affirmed that Jesus must fulfill the will of God and allow himself to be led by the Holy Spirit, this should not be understood in a mechanical way, but rather - Balthasar uses this example - "this relationship could be compared to the phenomenon that is called inspiration in both the natural and the

supernatural realm [...].Never is an artist freer than when he does not (any longer) have to choose hesitatingly among the various creative possibilities, but is (as it were) 'possessed' by the true idea which at last offers itself to him and follows its imperious commands; if his inspiration is genuine, never will his work bear more clearly such a personal stamp"[586] . This example shows us that obedience cannot be for Jesus a strange power to which he is subject, because although he acts "in the power of the Spirit" (Lk 4:14), he does not do it from outside, nor in a second moment, but in his freedom he identifies himself with the light and the power of the Holy Spirit, where the will of the Father, from his identity as Son, appears to him as his most intimate desire because it is what develops him as Son. It is the concrete fulfillment of what we have said about the mutual interpenetration of finite and infinite freedom, that is to say, in Jesus the freedom that he possesses, which is human and finite, with all its own characteristics, derives in such a way from the infinite, that it transcends itself perfectly in it. We must not forget that the Spirit of the Father is also his own Spirit.

> But the ultimate consequences have not yet been deduced. Jesus of Nazareth in his earthly life is in communication and dialogue not with "God" (the Trinitarian) but with his Father. He does not develop the salvific plan of the triune God, but receives his mission from the Father through the Spirit and has always decided and offered himself for this mission. There is no reason (precisely according to the way Scripture speaks) to establish two decisions of the Son (which would follow one another chronologically): the first, as God, in eternity, and the second, human, in time. The eternal decision of the Son includes in itself the temporal one, and the temporal one apprehends the eternal one as the only one of interest. But the eternal one is not dictated by the Son alone, but is always Trinitarian; in it the hierarchy of the Trinitarian processions is preserved even though all the persons have the same ontological rank and the same character of eternity; in it also the Son grasps from always in the Holy Spirit the mission that comes from the Father. Precisely for this reason the Son made man, in his now also human freedom, does not grasp his own will as God, but first and foremost the paternal will, to which he has always given his assent. It is precisely in this grasp that Jesus finds his own deepest identity as the eternal Son .[587]

This dense - and extensive - passage of Balthasar shows us that in order to understand the concrete way in which the mission of the Son is carried out in a fully human life, it is indispensable to have a truly Trinitarian way of thinking. In Jesus everything is understood from his relationship with the Father. This is what allows us to adequately

unify the eternal pre-existence with his earthly life and not to establish an unbridgeable dichotomy. Balthasar, in this and other moments, shows how eternity can be in temporality from what we have said about the glory of God and the *analogia entis.* Indeed, in the concrete life of Jesus - historically developed - is necessarily included the previous eternal decision of him - which is part of his generated being as Son - and, therefore, his whole life - as such and seeking at all times to fulfill the will of the Father - is simply the historical development of the previous decision, although none of that is conscious or explicit. All this is a-thematic, but it is expressed in the thematization of a historical life, faithful, free and full of love and surrender for others and to the Father.

Jesus' self-awareness

This is perhaps the most complex issue with regard to the historical development of Jesus, because here we encounter some exegetical problems-which we have seen and dealt with-where both the humanity of Jesus and his identity as Savior are at stake. In fact, one cannot "attribute to the Jesus who appears after Easter a content of consciousness totally different from that of the earthly Jesus: he gives himself as identical to the previous one and he is identical [...] It is impossible that God would have taken a death, the meaning of which is unknown to the dying man, as an occasion to reconcile the world to himself". There Balthasar poses with precision the theme: what conscience Jesus had of himself and how it has remained within the human margins. Jesus must have had a minimal and basic awareness of who he was and what he was doing, otherwise salvation would be an event extrinsic to him; but for us it is impossible and useless - even offensive - to try to delve into the psychology of the God-man. For this reason, Balthasar enters into this theme starting from his "hermeneutical thread" - the concept of mission - deducing from the awareness of his mission the identity of the Son, and then reflecting on whether this is compatible with a historical mediation proper to every human being .[588]

1. Starting from the "formal identity of person and mission", since Jesus gives himself entirely to the mission as the one sent, and in the

light of the theology of John and Paul, where "the mission is absolutely universal", something that - as we have shown - Jesus somehow knew from his eschatological awareness of the coming of the kingdom of God with him; "in the individual human consciousness of Jesus dwells a dimension that continually, in an unequivocal and radical way, surpasses the purely human horizon of consciousness": "I am the one to whom this mission belongs". For Balthasar this is "Jesus' original intuition about his identity"[589] . From this he deduces:

> Based on this, we can anticipate that Jesus, in the most nuclear and indivisible part of his self-consciousness, possesses a moment of the divine: intuitively, since he is inseparable from the intuition of his mission consciousness, but determined by and limited to his mission consciousness. Only from here does he have a *"visio immediata"* [= immediate vision], and there is no reason to attribute this *visio* of the divine to another content that is, in a certain sense, at a purely theoretical level, alongside or above the mission . [590]

His consciousness of "Son of God" is in reality that "moment of the divine" "of his mission consciousness", which does not mean a "weak" consciousness (of Son), but rather a *non-thematic*, intuitive one, but absolutely clear in that it means a mission, which will give him the content to that divine moment. And since the mission is not imposed on him from outside, nor is it something he has invented for himself, but something he has recognized as a task that has always accompanied him, then "his self is identical with it"[591] . And from there his personal identity becomes clear, since, like every mission, it has a backward relationship with someone who sends him and forward with a task to be carried out. Therefore, this awareness of mission allows him to relate intimately with the one who sends him, whom he naturally calls "father," and also opens before him a historical journey to fulfill that mission. And the mission cannot be considered an obligation, even though he identifies with it, because he fulfills it from his identity as the one sent by the Father, that is, from his condition as Son. The important thing in all this is not to see any heteronomy in the conduct of the Son, since the fulfillment of the will of the Father is identical with the development of himself as Son in the fulfillment of the mission that identifies him as sent.

This conception of Jesus' conscience allows us to understand perfectly the possibility of temptations in Jesus, since he must walk

forward, where no one forces him and, although he identifies himself with the mission, many possibilities are open to him there and, therefore, he can also be subjected to a temptation not to fulfill his mission.

This is all the more reason to understand the presence of prayer in Jesus as a true human activity:

> The prayer component in the figure of the envoy shows its necessary character all the more clearly because the mission is not entirely open to his gaze, but must be carried out step by step according to the instructions of the Father (in the Holy Spirit), the final part remaining at the disposal of the Son .[592]

Balthasar even speaks "of the *'faith' of Jesus*[593] , which he seems to possess in relation to the Father at the center of the intuition of his mission". However, our author is very careful in the use of this term, since it is not exactly the same as our faith. Hence the use of quotation marks around the word *faith*:

> The qualitative difference with respect to our faith lies in the fact that we receive our mission only because we have come to faith, while Jesus has always had and has always been his mission, and in his mission he is the one who gives himself entirely and trusts the Father, who shows him the way. He, however, neither knows nor wants to know the paths that God travels with him to carry out the mission, but he is certain that the Father will carry out the mission to the end, and for this reason the definition of faith offered in the letter to the Hebrews can be applied to him: "The assurance of things hoped for, the conviction (or proof) of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1) .[594]

So we can speak without problems of a faith in Jesus in the sense of trust and abandonment in the hands of the Father that, at the same time, is united to a maximum responsibility and commitment to decide how to carry out that mission with freedom and initiative. Mission consciousness is linked to free responsibility and free will.

Balthasar concludes this first part on the consciousness and identity of Jesus on the basis of the mission, taking up and synthesizing what K. Rahner and H. Riedlinger[595] , affirming that in Jesus there is a "coincidence of self-consciousness and God-consciousness, but this is limited to the *missio*," since "in the consciousness of the mission the immediate relationship with the Father is shown. But if the awareness of the mission coincides with the awareness of the self, the one sent can be aware of who he truly is not only in certain historical situations", since in Jesus there is an inexorable awareness that he has

come as the revealer of the Father not "in isolated moments, but in each and every situation of his life", although this can also mean that the way of revealing him can be the concealment of God .[596]

2. The second great issue that Balthasar must face is how this immediate awareness that Jesus possesses about his mission -the product of his divine moment- can be compatible with the awakening and historical development of every human conscience. This is a complex issue and the truth of his human being is also at stake. In other words, what happens with the child Jesus, "how can the child Jesus have been awakening to his self-consciousness without knowing something - at least implicitly - about his mission? This is the historical aspect of Jesus' consciousness. Balthasar must face "a long and serious theological tradition" that "has considered it appropriate to the dignity of the Savior of the world to attribute to him, already from the moment of his incarnation, not only the knowledge of his mission, but everything humanly knowable, at least in all that concerns salvation". Moreover, "this theologumenon, which runs through patristics and scholasticism, is not only due to a short-sighted theology of convenience that would like to equip Christ with all the excellencies that apparently correspond to him", but seems to have its origin in the New Testament itself, where many times "Jesus appears 'knowing all things' (Jn 16:30)"[597] . In this regard, Balthasar is clear:

> In this conception, scholastic apriorism collides with an elementary truth of human reality: a child who has not been awakened to the awareness of his self by a you who challenges him would in no way be a human child. Thomas' assertion [that Jesus learns nothing from men] contravenes the logic of the incarnation . [598]

On the contrary, in Jesus it has been indispensable - as in every human being - to have been awakened to self-consciousness by a you, and not only in the first instant of the opening of consciousness during the first years of life, but also throughout life, since every human being possesses an insurmountable relationship-necessity with/of the other human "you" for the development of his own identity. Therefore, in Jesus, who is truly man, although his awareness of himself coincides with the awareness of his mission and has certainly been present in an implicit way from the first instant and throughout his

existence -that is, although he becomes aware of being human together with becoming aware of his mission and, therefore, of his identity as Son-, this has not exempted him; on the contrary, it has implied that this self-awareness is awakened from the relationship with others who introduce him into human life. And it will be from this experience with others that Jesus will be configuring his own identity from what has always been implicitly present in him. This does not mean, in any way, that Jesus has been attributed a mission from outside, but that "it is only necessary that the initial awakening be in 'pre-established' harmony with the peculiarity of his self-consciousness (always his own); therefore, that the initiation of this child in his interior, from his eternal Father, be in consonance with his external, social and historical initiation"[599] .

Here Mariology appears in all its depth as "an internal element of Christology"[600] , precisely because there must be coordination and coherence between what Jesus is internally and the external elements that correctly awaken this. In Jesus, as in every child, the education he receives is not indifferent. It shapes the person from his own identity. But that does not mean that Mary needed to know something special about the mission of Jesus, but that it was only necessary for her to introduce him in a simple, authentic and adequate way in the faith of the people and in the biblical traditions. By exposing it in an appropriate way to the child "the child's intimate awareness of his mission, already rooted in his person, thus becomes sufficiently awake, and, through the action of the Holy Spirit, he can gradually clarify the material offered in the intimate meditation of his task and in the ever deeper initiation into it"[601] . And then this continues throughout his life, in the different stages of knowledge, growth and existential deepening, like every human being. Therefore, in Jesus, there is a process of temporary acceptance of the experiences he lives and of his own identity in proportion to his human maturation, but in the understanding that it is *always* a development of the original identity of his mission and of his person. Jesus is not asked to know in advance everything that would be his life in the future, but only that he accept his mission more and more deeply, according to the events

that will happen to him -which he could not know beforehand if he was a true man-. As Rahner says[602] , it is often better not to know something than to know it, because this allows for greater trust, freedom and creativity, in short, greater love. Jesus is always accompanied by obedience and availability, which is his way of living his divine filiation as the one sent, that is to say, it is his deepest identity.

> But in the same measure in which the mission becomes present without being immemorially thought of beforehand and is made explicit in the historical sphere, in that measure it is increasingly inserted in historicity itself. It awaits the signs and indications of God for the realization of the mission, which will come not simply from within but also from outside, because the fulfillment of the mission will essentially take place in a concrete consummation of history, from which the will of the Father comes to meet us in no lesser measure than from the intimate consolations . [603]

Consequently, for Balthasar, a Christology of conscience of this kind allows the Son to be truly introduced into human life - as an authentic human protagonist - because "what is not assumed is not redeemed" (Gregory of Nazianzus). In this way Jesus becomes the perfect model of faith and hope. With that also, in the light of identification with his mission, he reveals to us something of what an eternal "generation" can mean (= I am what I have received). And, finally, in this way a true involvement of the Trinity in the history of the world is realized. This Balthasarian proposal, as was predictable, has been criticized by the current neo-scholastic and neo-Thomistic positions, but it seems to me that Balthasar is right to denounce a limitation - on this point - in the thought of Thomas and of all scholasticism (and patristics). The essential content of his limitation is not having sufficiently taken into account the theology of the two *statuses* in the Word of God nor -as it could not be otherwise at that time- the historicity of being and human consciousness.

Trinitarian investment

The Son obeys the will of the Father through the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, as clearly appears in the New Testament. This, for Balthasar, supposes in the economic order what he has called the *Trinitarian inversion*. By this he means to affirm that in the economy a momentary inversion of the normal order of the Trinity

occurs between the Son and the Holy Spirit. Indeed, if in *the cabs* (= order) of the immanent Trinity the Holy Spirit is in third place (because he proceeds from the Father and the Son, although primarily from the Father), in the economic reality, due to the *status exinanitionis* of the Son, the Holy Spirit is positioned *between* the Father and the Son (that is, in second place) to indicate to the Son the will of the Father. Then, with the resurrection the order returns to normal, since in the *status exaltationis* it is the Risen One who gives the Holy Spirit to the Church and to the world[604] . This Trinitarian (economic) investment is the condition of possibility for Jesus to live a true human life, led by the Spirit, and then to be a model for us. Hence Balthasar introduces this theme precisely after his reflections on the mission consciousness of Jesus and its historical "development," as we have just reviewed.

For Balthasar, it is the *status exinanitionis* that demands this reversal, which can be seen affirmed both biblically and in the *Apostolic Creed*. The Creed - and indeed every formula of Christian faith - explicitly based on Lk 1:35, affirms that the Son "was conceived by the work of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary."

> All these formulas of the common Christian faith let the activity of the Spirit appear in the process of the incarnation, while the Son, who is conceived and who is born, lets himself be disposed of and made in him, which is expressed grammatically in the passive. This means, therefore, that the obedience of the Son does not only take place after the incarnation (which would have been produced by his own activity), but that his soteriological obedience has already begun with the incarnation itself .[605]

That is to say, from the very moment of the incarnation, the Spirit assumes an active position vis-à-vis the Son, who allows himself to be incarnated and then allows himself to be led by the Spirit throughout his mission, that is, the Spirit positions himself "above" Jesus. This obviously does not mean a change in the immanent Trinity, nor does it mean that there is no longer a perfect concordance between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity. This is so because in the immanent Trinity there are two facts: in the eternal generation there is transcendentally included the possibility of the Son being obedient and subjected to absolute dependence as a creature; and in the procession of the Spirit of the Father there is the transcendental

possibility that economically the Spirit mediates between the will of the Father and the Son and where the Son allows himself to be led by the Spirit. It seems to Balthasar that this does not contradict the doctrine of Thomas about the order of the missions of the Son and the Spirit, that is, that "'according to the natural order, the mission of the Son is before the mission of the Holy Spirit, since the Holy Spirit according to the natural order proceeds as love of the Father and the Son'; therefore, the hypostatic union precedes the gift of habitual grace as the effect of the mission of the Spirit (S Th III 7,13)"[606] . Only this thesis[607] is unilateral, as W. Kasper has also affirmed[608] . In fact, according to Lk 1:35, Jesus was begotten - that is, he became Jesus - by a powerful and unique action of the Holy Spirit, with which the Holy Spirit is showing that the incarnation is a free and common work of the Father and the Son, since "the Spirit as the bond made person in the freedom of love between Father and Son, is the *medium* in which the Father sends the Son in freedom and by pure grace, and in which he finds, in Jesus, the human partner, and is the *medium* in which and through which the Son responds obediently and in a historical way to the mission of the Father (Kasper)"[609] . In the action of the Holy Spirit to "incarnate" the Son, he already performs an act of obedience insofar as he entrusts himself, in conformity to the will of the Father, to the action of the Holy Spirit, and this makes him man and son "of" the Virgin Mary. And all this does not affect the doctrine of the *Filioque,* since the affirmation "through the Son" - or "and of the Son" - is valid for the economic Trinity as well as for the immanent Trinity. Indeed, the Son in receiving from all eternity his divine being, receives also with that the power to breathe forth the Holy Spirit. "Therefore, in the same way, in his incarnation he really possesses *in* himself his disposition to be led by the Spirit"[610] .

Consequently, although evidently - according to what Thomas said - the constitution of the subject Jesus precedes the act of the gift of grace by the Risen One, this does not imply that in the incarnation the activity of the Holy Spirit must occur after that of the Son. Nor can this be deduced "from the intratrinitarian relations". On the other hand, the economic Trinity is simply the one that has been verified

and in it the Son had to learn, as man, in the suffering of obedience; and the Holy Spirit is the one who in his economic form "communicates to the Son the will of the Father" and makes that obedience possible, since "he is in-above him". And all this is in perfect harmony with the immanent Trinity, since "from all eternity the Spirit has a double countenance": he is the fruit and expression of the love of the Father and of the Son, but moreover, in this very thing "he is an objective witness of their difference in unity or of their unity in difference"[611] . Therefore, since the Spirit is the fruit of common love, this is expressed economically - in the state of kenosis - in his task of indicating to Jesus the will of the Father for the realization of his identity-mission, with which the very mission of the Spirit sends us back to the intra-Trinitarian decision of the common salvation that they had to undertake. And since the Spirit is also a witness of that common love, then that economically - in the state of kenosis - is equally expressed in representing to the Son the will of the Father but in "the form of an absolute and even inexorable *rule* in the passion"[612] . This is why the Spirit leads Jesus throughout his life, and Balthasar can calmly affirm - as a conclusion - that "what we have designated as 'inversion' is ultimately nothing more than the 'translation' of the immanent Trinity into the realm of the 'economic', in which the 'correspondence' of the Son to the Father is articulated as 'obedience'"[613] .

What does it mean to be a divine person?

The theme of the conscience of Jesus also raises a problem that is certainly "a thorny problem of Christology": how can a true human being "speak when he says 'I' as a divine person and not as a human person? Balthasar's answer is oriented from a principle that is essential: it is a problem "*strictly theological*" and, therefore, its solution is not in philosophy[614] . The theme then has two moments: to understand well the concept of person; and then to understand adequately the person-nature relationship in Christ. Balthasar devotes some good pages to the topic, with a historical journey that we cannot repeat here. His reflection proceeds in four steps.

1. The person *cannot* be identified with *self-consciousness,* because the

latter belongs to nature and, therefore, cannot be contradistinguished from it[615] . In fact, every living being participates in "a specific nature, identical in all individuals, but always possessed in a unique and incommunicable way"[616] . In the case of the human being, all individual subjects belong to the same human nature, but which exists only in individuals, each of which is unique and unrepeatable. However, this unrepeatable uniqueness does not define, per se, who each one is. It is only a quantitative - not a qualitative - difference with respect to all the other spiritual subjects we call human beings. It describes the human being, but does not define who he is. Empirical characteristics, being accidental, cannot fulfill this function. And the opinion that others have of one -also accidental- cannot do so either. Hence Balthasar's first conclusion: "so far there is no basis for introducing, in this complementarity of the generic and individual nature of men, a concept of 'person' that should (or even could) be disconnected from that of the spiritual subject"[617] . That is to say, none of this is what we call *person*, although it is the common opinion to identify it with "spiritual subject". For this reason, Balthasar, from the origin of the concept - which historically is *theological* - proposes another understanding of the notion of "person", in order to be able to get out of this insecurity of not knowing *who* each subject properly *is*, that is, of not knowing in what my being a person (= unique and unrepeatable) consists. For him, the personal quality is constituted by the relationship that God establishes with each human being:

> This assurance cannot, however, arise from the sphere of the impersonal world (which provides the empirical features) or from the sphere of otherness (in which each one can give the other only problematic and precarious assurances) but only from the absolute subject, from God. Where God tells a spiritual subject who he is for him, the faithful and truthful God, and where in the same movement he tells him why he exists (for he assigns him a mission accredited by God), then it can be said of a spiritual subject that he is a person. This has already happened, in an archetypal way, in Jesus Christ, to whom his eternal "definition" ("you are my beloved son") was given, inasmuch as he, as we have seen, was given before time (*unvordenklich*)[618] his very special and universal mission and with it a totally precise knowledge of *who* he is[619]

From the "common thread" of this entire section - the identity of mission and person in Christ - Balthasar affirms that the concept of person can be well understood only from the mission given by God to

each spiritual being, that is, if we understand it as the vocation of each one; and that is more than simply being a "spiritual subject." In fact, God establishes with each spiritual subject a relationship that is necessarily unique and definitive -because God does not repent of his decisions or his love-, then, from the mission received -which is also the meaning and the reason for which he has been created-, each individual is unique and unrepeatable (for God and for others), and that is what gives him the character of unique and unrepeatable person loved by God. Now, this character of person - like all the characteristics of the human being - is the image of the Archetype, which is Christ. From his own mission, which is identified with his divine person, Christ also has for us the condition of primordial and archetypal person. In this way, each one of us, in the image of Christ, has received a mission (= vocation) which, as we develop it, is identified with our own spiritual being and thus unfolds as our personal being. Therefore, also in each human spiritual subject the mission is what (from a theological point of view) has constituted him as a person, only that, unlike the Archetype, in the human person this mission is gradually realized and identified. In this sense it can be said that each person must *become* what at the same time "is" and "is called to be". As can be seen, the concept of person is purely theological, that is, it is granted by God, but it is granted to all human beings because all have been created in Christ, and each one must develop this personal character throughout his existence. Hence, to identify person simply with spiritual subject is still insufficient, and it does not serve either to understand Christ, as Balthasar will now explain.

2. He will devote long pages to showing that this concept has been elaborated by theology and, therefore, it is only there that one can authentically understand what it means to be a person and, in our subject, what it means and how the divine person acts in Jesus. However, the development of the concept of personhood to apply to Christ encountered many difficulties, because "the underlying philosophical conceptual material moved exclusively in the space of tension of the natural subject between specific nature and individuality." Patristics did not succeed in getting beyond the

characterization of the person "as the 'peculiar,' the 'in-(co)-municable,' that which 'exists-for-itself' or that which 'subsists-in-itself'"[620] . On the other hand, the concept of person proper to Trinitarian theology "could not be transferred with precision to the Christological problematic". And then there was the difficulty of the imprecision of the concepts of *prosopon* (Greek) and *persona* (Latin). They could designate either "the spiritual nature" or "the spiritual subject". Even more difficult was the history of the concepts of *hypostasis* and *ousia*. They could point both to "the individual existent being" and to "the specific nature (which does not exist as such)"[621] , whereby they could mean both *reality* and *personality*. With later patristic development it was not possible to go beyond understanding *hypostasis* as "the segregated," "the indivisible or *individuum*," "the proper," "the existent by itself," "and, in the case of the individual being on the level of spirit, someone"[622] . Thus, "among the Greeks hypostasis is maintained as a concept applicable to all levels of being, which on the level of the spiritual designates the individual spiritual subject." And "Boethius will have the advantage of dealing from the beginning only with the spiritual subject, which however is again equated with the person: '*persona est naturae rationalis individua substantia*' [= person is an individual substance of rational nature]; this will be for the scholastics the classical definition". With this the subject remained equally stuck "in the opposition between the general and the particular"[623] .

We have made this brief historical tour to clearly exhibit the problem that Balthasar discovers here (and many others as well): applied to Christ that concept is confronted with the insoluble difficulty of "how that which exists in the form of substance in itself and which is free and rational" (that is, the complete humanity of Christ), that is, a spiritual subject, "can be 'owned' by a distinct other that seems to divest it of its being-in-itself (*substance*)," since that humanity is the *person* of the divine Word. The problem is clear: since a synonym has been made between "spiritual subject" and "person", in Christ there is no way to distinguish between the "human spiritual subject" (proper to every existing human nature) and the "divine person" (who is the one

who has become incarnate)[624] , because, either there are two "persons" in Jesus, or (as it was in practice what happened) the humanity of Jesus is stripped of something of its own (falling into a larval monophysitism).

For Balthasar, then, the solution is not philosophical but theological, to apply to the personal being of Christ as well as to that of human beings. It is not "the characteristics of the spiritual subject within a genus" (human being), but "only God who can determine and designate this subject in its qualitative peculiarity, and this determination expresses, in the unique archetypal case, at the same time the who and the what for, the meaning, the task and the mission [...] But *in Christo* there remains for each man the hope not to remain merely an individual spiritual subject, but to become from God's point of view a person with an equally determined task *in* Christo"[625] .

3. Having shown the difficulties in arriving at an adequate concept of person, Balthasar now proposes his own solution. He does so, as so often, with a personal, characteristic and novel concept. It is the *Christological analogia entis*. Starting from the fundamental biblical fact that the created being is the image of God - which, however, does not eliminate the insurmountable difference between God and creature - Balthasar affirms that the person of Jesus Christ, in an ineffable way, overcomes the abyss that exists between God and creature, but without eliminating the difference between one and the other (because, according to Lateran IV, "God" and "creature" cannot be enclosed under a common concept).

> This simply means that the person of the Logos, in whom the hypostatic union takes place, can in no way serve as the ("superior") unity between God and man; it is in fact God as such. Since it is the definitive union of two, it must constitute the ultimate measure between the two, and therefore the *"analogia entis* concreta," but in no way can it go beyond this analogy in the direction of identity .[626]

This deserves an explanation. It means several things that must be understood complementarily. In the first place, when we speak of *analogia entis* we are saying that "there is no possible comparison between the absolute and infinite God and the finite creature that depends totally on him", since analogy does not mean that the two magnitudes (God and creature) can be compared, but indicates only

that the creature is completely referred to God[627] . Therefore, in the second place, when we speak of analogy between God and the human person, we are affirming that "every created spiritual nature is an image of the prototype God, an image that is fundamental and indestructible" because of its rational and free being that has received a participation in divine freedom. Therefore, thirdly, as a consequence of what has just been said, Balthasar recalls that "throughout the history of theology the possibility and meaning of the incarnation of the Logos have been repeatedly described as the intimate and radicalized consummation of the image by its elevation to the divine prototype or as the insertion of the prototype into the image"[628] . In other words, since the created is the image of God, the incarnation means that the Prototype (the Word) assumes his image (human nature) and in assuming it-without destroying it at all-brings it to its fullest expression. Therefore, if we have seen that human nature-as image-can "say" something of God, then when that nature has been assumed as its own by the very *Word* of God, its "word," without ceasing to be human, can authentically express the Word of God. Balthasar calls this *analogia entis* concreta.

However, this explanation - which is well understood at the abstract and being level - must also be able to be applied - credibly - to the conscience and freedom of Jesus, which are what is most proper to a human being. That is why he devotes the following pages to explaining how human conscience and freedom can subsist - as such - together with divine conscience and freedom, since, if Jesus possesses both natures, he must then possess everything that pertains to them, without having to postulate a kind of double "existential" conscience in Jesus. He had already hinted at the solution when he spoke of the relationship between finite freedom and infinite freedom, in such a way that here he only concretizes it with respect to Jesus, based on the criteria that he had already exposed in the previous volume and - of course- on the identity between person and mission.

For a true incarnation to take place, which does not destroy human nature, it is indispensable that "the entire existence of Jesus," although "at the service of his manifestation of God," be "realized in a fully

human spiritual subject," endowed with true consciousness and human freedom[629] . So when the Logos became incarnate, he really became "that" man with whom he identified himself, and this necessarily implied "the identification of the Logos with the consciousness of a human spiritual subject. And since this begins to exist in a chronological moment, it is also necessary for the Logos to be given the moment in which he 'comes into the world' as this man"[630] . This is what manifests itself in Jesus as the "identity of his self with his mission," which "is from everlasting (*unvordenklich ist*)"; and which then must have been given "from the first moment of his conception," even though it has been becoming conscious and developing as the consciousness of every human being[631] . Consequently, there is no kind of double personality or double consciousness in Jesus, but the unity of a human spiritual subject appropriated by the Logos as *his* humanity. "The mission of which Jesus is conscious is the mission of the only Son"[632] . He acts freely and consciously from his own identity which is his mission. And in this he is being the Son of God who fulfills the will of the Father. And furthermore, it is not "necessary to divide the Son of God situated in his mission into one who fulfills his mission on earth, and another who remains immutable in heaven." "The one sent is a unique being who, insofar as eternal, remains in time." Only, as we have already mentioned, from his most mysterious kenosis he has assumed the form of a slave "depositing" in the hands of the Father his divine condition, in an ineffable event that entails the entrance of eternity in time. In short, it is simply "the supreme revelation in the world of the diastasis between Father and Son in the Holy Spirit within the eternal being of God"[633] .

With respect to the freedom of Jesus -of which we have already spoken-, here we only have to add one aspect that contributes to the understanding of this concrete *analogia entis*. The Son -Jesus- from his mission allows himself to be led by the Holy Spirit, but not in an external way, but as a fully free and conscious decision to live absolutely dedicated to the mission that identifies him. "Between his understanding of the paternal mission and his decision to fulfill it, there is no intermediate instance; he is the one who has always given

his assent to this mission". Hence for Balthasar the formula "one of the Trinity has suffered" (DH 401)[634] - referring to the Son - is perfectly adequate, but understood in the way we have mentioned about Jesus and his mission consciousness, with which he identifies himself and which the Logos assumes. Hence Balthasar's conclusion:

> And if it is true that one in God takes upon oneself suffering to the point of abandonment by God and recognizes it as one's own, this obviously does not happen as something alien to God that does not affect him intimately, but as something that concerns his divine person in the deepest sense, insofar as - to say it once again - the *missio* [= mission] received from the Father is a modality of his *processio* [= procession] from the Father .[635]

4. The identity between the consciousness of mission and of self in Jesus implies considering also the content of that mission since "only a mission that is universal can be identical with the consciousness of self", even if its execution takes time[636] . And if that mission is universal it must be open to and influence all humanity. For Balthasar this is realized in Jesus on the basis of four major considerations.

a. *Jesus is present to all humanity in himself.* "By his awareness of a universal mission and by the implication in it of the divinity of his self, Jesus is not a spiritual subject of human nature like others." Indeed, although Jesus, like every human individual, "in spite of his exclusivity, includes all others, being a sharer in the concrete of the whole of nature"[637] , and in that sense he had all humanity present in his consciousness in the manner of an aprioristic knowledge; however, in his case there is even more than that: "Christ enters into human nature not as a simple spiritual subject, but as a person superior to the whole of nature," since he is, moreover, "the personal Logos who has created all rational beings [...] and in whom all participate by nature"[638] .

b. *The Word in Jesus is exchanged with us.* As Irenaeus affirmed , "the Word of God became what we are, so that we might become what he himself is"[639] . This also includes the passion and resurrection, in which the whole of human nature has also participated. However, this exchange of places is only possible if the one who assumes this human nature and suffers for others is one of the Trinity, since, as we have just seen, his divine person "is the only one who allows us to enter

into the extreme situation of a free man before God in order to transform it so that it ceases to be a dead end and is filled with hope"[640] . This idea appears insinuated in the New Testament - in narrating the passion - and in the words of Jesus that show that he knows of his hour, which was theologically elaborated with Paul's formula *pro nobis* (= for us), which properly means "a real assumption of the personal and social situation of the sinner, in such a way that it means 'in our place'"[641] . Thus, "the idea of representation belongs to the essence of all New Testament Christology" (Cullmann) .[642]

c. *We now exist in Christ.* This same idea has been expressed by Paul with his famous formula "*en Christōi*" [= in Christ], which speaks of "the operative and vital sphere created by the scope of the universal mission of Jesus"[643] , that is, it "indicates to us the universal scope of his mission"[644] . To be "in Christ" is a fact caused by Jesus - as an "essential result of his mission" - through the sending of the Holy Spirit, in such a way that it is also synonymous with the formula *"in Pneumati"* [= in the Spirit][645] . Living "in Christ", in Paul, is equivalent to both "we in Christ" and "Christ in us", which means that the presence of Christ in the Christian expropriates him of himself, in order to personalize him and endow him with a mission, in such a way that he is transformed into a con-living, con-dying and con-resurrection with Christ, in order to finally be "one in Christ". Christ is then a "universal personality" that endows us with a unique personal characteristic .[646]

d. *Mediatorial function.* Now, these attributes and others that Paul and John give to Jesus are related to what Jesus himself thought of himself, which can be confirmed if we remember the aspects involved in the awareness that Jesus has of the mission he has received, which identifies him. In fact, "he understands himself as the superior point that brings to fulfillment and surpasses a series of historical missions [...] and that he consummates by surpassing it"; "but he also understands himself as the revealer of God, whom he knows in an incomparable way and makes known in his own way". Then, "in the case that he has known his mission as truly universal there is no reason to limit" these lines of thought, but, on the contrary, we must

recognize in Paul and John the normal development of them[647]. Therefore: (1) By the word *primacy* over creation and *firstborn* of humanity, the cosmic consequences and implications of the universality of his mission are simply being expressed. If the human being - in Genesis - is the culmination of creation, then his redemption is necessarily also the renewal of the entire creation and, therefore, the arrival of a new aeon[648]. (2) If the incarnate one - as Son - carries out the mission entrusted to him, which is the fullness of creation as the fruit of the coming of the kingdom of God, then he is carrying out the plan of God intended from the beginning, for which reason, as Son, he must have been "from all time" "in God's design that creation should be accomplished"[649], that is, God "chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world [.... and] destined us through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of his will to be his children" (Eph 1:4-5). (3) If Jesus has been sent by the Father with a mission that is "the compendium of the Word of God addressed to the world"[650], Word that is identified with God, then the logical consequence is the preexistence of the Son, an affirmation that appears in the hymns of Colossians, Ephesians and in the prologue of John. (4) If with his mission and through his life God brings creation to its consummation, in such a way that everything had been created to reach that fullness, then the Son-Jesus with his mission-has had a "*mediatorial function in creation* not only [as] Logos but [as] Christ"[651].

VI. Trinitarian soteriology and the redemptive substitution of Jesus.

The soteriology that Balthasar proposes, although its culminating point is found in *Theodramatics* IV -when he exposes the content and meaning of the passion of Jesus-, must be understood in intimate and strict connection with what he has already said about the meaning and characteristics of the incarnation of the Word, as well as what he will later say about the immanent Trinity (in *Theodramatics* V and *Theologica* II) and about eschatology (in *Theodramatics* V). Indeed, Balthasar's soteriology involves the Word made flesh *and* the Trinity in such a way that only from a perspective that also embraces both aspects can it be understood in its true magnitude and with all its nuances. This is due to two reasons: to the relationship between being and acting in Jesus (and in every person) and to the fact that the passion, death and descent of Jesus into hell is the culmination *of the Trinitarian* revelation of God. With respect to the first reason, when Balthasar in *Theodramatica* II introduces the characters of the drama, he states that

> Only the action will reveal who each one is, and not in the first place who the character that is gradually revealed has always *been*, but who the one who is acting, experiencing encounters and making decisions *will be*. The one and the other, the "was" and the "will be," are at least in reciprocal relationship. *Agere sequitur esse* demands at the same time an *esse sequitur agere* .[652]

So the action or deed of Jesus in the passion is not only the fruit of who Jesus is (the incarnate Word), but, in the same way, we will really know who Jesus is only after his action (suffering) in the passion. Hence there is an indissoluble relationship between the passion of Jesus, a Trinitarian understanding of God and the reality of the incarnation, since all three illuminate each other. This is theologically very relevant because it demands a very precise perspective in order to understand what is happening in the passion in its authentic essential reality. And that perspective can be none other

than the recognition that "one of the Trinity" is suffering there, that he has become man and that he is fulfilling a mission that is identical to his person. And from there arises the second reason: if the passion is a culminating action of the economic Trinity, then it reveals in the most profound way-though without ever losing its quality as a mystery that surpasses us-what the immanent Trinity is like.

Therefore, assuming what has already been said, especially in chapter two, on the Trinity, and in chapter five, on the incarnation of the Word, we will limit ourselves here to describing the fundamental ideas that explain his understanding of soteriology and the most characteristic contributions of his theology of redemption (and which must still be complemented by what we will say in chapter nine on eschatology). We will present the subject in two parts. The first, more brief, will explain how Balthasar presents *soteriology at through history,* since this will highlight what interests him (because summaries are always selective) and, above all, it will allow us to better appreciate the contributions that, in the face of this history, he himself will later offer. And then, a synthesis of the basic contents and the fundamental emphases of Balthasar's characteristic soteriology. All this is developed in *Theodramatics* IV. *The Action.* In any case, it must be stated at the outset that all his reflection is oriented by the concept that seems to him to be decisive: the vicarious substitution of Christ, that is, the *pro nobis.* From there he reviews the history of soteriology and proposes his own conception .[653]

Soteriology through history

Before presenting his own understanding of Christ's redemptive act, Balthasar presents - from a rather historical perspective, as is his classic method - the fundamental contents of Christian soteriology. He does so in two stages: (1) he makes explicit the biblical content and (2) he explains the subsequent theological reflection. The biblical content is presented on the basis of two aspects: Jesus' awareness of the *hour* of the passion and the fundamental theological nuclei found in the New Testament. The theological reflection, on the other hand, is presented from a historical perspective, from the Fathers of the

Church to the present day. With all this, he will point out the most fundamental elements for understanding Christian soteriology, but he will also show the difficulties that theology has had in integrating all these different aspects into a unitary understanding. This will be the challenge that Balthasar will then take up with his own integrative proposal based on the *pro nobis* .[654]

Central elements of Scripture

1. *The life of Jesus walks towards the "hour".* For Balthasar, "the whole dynamic of the Gospels, both the Synoptic Gospels and the Johannine Gospel, arises from the diastasis between the 'life of Jesus', which contains an internal tendency towards the 'hour', as yet unknown, but which nevertheless decides everything"[655] . This means that Jesus, in spite of the awareness of his mission that identifies him as Son, which means that with him comes an eschatological intervention of God-the kingdom of God-does not know how (all of) this intervention of God is going to develop, nor when it will be. On the contrary, a fundamental element of his mission is precisely to allow himself to be led by the Spirit, until that "hour" of the Father arrives in which he will have to take his obedience to the extreme, which, in turn, manifests the love of God and his authentic Trinitarian condition as Son. That is why the "diastasis" or separation between his present earthly work and the final hour -which he knows implies eschatological "pains"- is what gives that authentic dramaticity to the life of Christ and to the whole development of the Gospels that proclaim it. And that hour is precisely the *passion,* with all its meaning of Trinitarian revelation and salvation for the human being. What John calls his "hour," the Synoptics designate more explicitly: "the Son of Man must suffer many things..." (Mk 8:31).

We can deduce three important things from this concept of "hour". First, the fact that Jesus "must suffer," that is, the coming of his hour-manifested more than once in the context of the question of his own identity-shows us that what is about to occur will also reveal Jesus' deeper identity. That is why the Synoptics intersperse the passion announcements at moments when the identity of Jesus is sought to be clarified, and John's Gospel speaks of the passion as the glorification

of Jesus. Only there will it be revealed who this Son really is.

Secondly, the fact that Jesus walks towards his hour implies that, although there is continuity in the whole of Jesus' life, there is a particular form of continuity and alignment between his preaching on the reign of God and the paschal mystery (because "the life before the hour is not a mere prologue"[656]). Indeed, the coming of the hour is "the point of greatest density" that orients the whole of Jesus' life, which is a race towards "a timeless time, by which he is seduced, from which [Jesus] thinks and builds" his whole life[657] . Biblically, the hour is a favorable time, a time of justice and eschatological hope, determined by God; in such a way that it is unalterable and must be faced in all its reality, allowing oneself to be led by historical events, since behind them is the will of the Father, even if this means an internal struggle. The tensions between the life of Jesus and his hour are important: "between the (active) life of Jesus and his hour a perfect unity reigns, but the caesura of the hour cannot be relegated or dissolved for the sake of pure continuity [...;] life is to go forward towards the hour [...] but it remains an action proper to Jesus in spite of everything; in the hour however dominates the idea of 'being delivered' [...] an 'over-demand' that can only be asked of this unique being"[658] .

And, thirdly, "what happens in the 'hour' remains a mystery, and all the interpretations that arose in the early Church cannot be brought back to a global and unitary 'system'"[659] . However, since "God acts decisively in the hour of Jesus toward which his life advances," its interpretation must be sought within the theology of the Covenant. If creation was not capable of fulfilling the covenant and humanity systematically rejected the mediators, then "on both sides the central word of the purification of the covenant, of the constitution of the new one, is '*pro nobis*'". In this concept the different aspects of it converge: "that there must be a judgment, that there must be an atonement, and that grace is that which overcomes, also through and in the midst of the judgment, so that the covenant may be genuinely and definitively restored"[660] . In fact, this concept of "*pro nobis*" - which emerged from Paul (1 Cor 15:3; Rom 4:25) - as an interpretation of

the deeper meaning of "the hour", will later appear in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed in the phrases "for our salvation he came down from heaven" and "for our sake he was also crucified". For Balthasar, then, this is the basic concept for understanding the passion of Jesus, since it summarizes the covenant: there "is the intervention of God that calls for the redemptive obedience of Jesus, but also the presence of those represented [...] in an active way"[661] . Thus, Balthasar will develop his soteriology around this idea, which will allow him a better and more harmonious incorporation of all the New Testament interpretative concepts.

2. *The key and essential aspects of the New Testament.* The New Testament possesses an organic unity, in which each of its aspects and theologies finds its place and is adequately related to the others. However, this does not mean that the data that appear in the different authors can be easily enclosed in a kind of superior "system", because each of the theologies also has its own particularities and perspectives. On this basis, with regard to our theme, Balthasar discovers five key ideas for understanding reconciliation and the whole of soteriology, all of which must be maintained in order to understand the mystery of redemption fully and adequately. For this, however, three dangers must be avoided: 1. "That one aspect acquires such predominance that the others lose their consistency. That the weight of the basic conviction [...] be replaced, because it is presumably conditioned by the epoch itself, by other equivalent formulations" that lose their force or change their essential meaning. 3. "That the tension between two aspects is not maintained, but that this tension is softened, or even diluted, in favor of an apparent synthesis", which again loses its essential meaning .[662]

The five interrelated aspects are the following. 1. "The reconciliation that God has established with the world presupposes the '*giving*' *of* God's 'own Son' 'for us all,' whereby he 'gives us all things' (Rom 8:32). But where the giving of the Son - of himself - coincides with the gift that the Father makes of that same Son, who is his own Son. "Thus arises the conception that he, as 'lamb' (as victim), is also the one who gives himself (Jn 1:28), and as priest (who offers the sacrifice) the one

who gives himself (Heb 3:14ff)"[663] . 2. "The giving of himself 'for us' goes as far as an authentic *change of place*". He is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). It is "a true act of taking upon himself in order to eliminate it", where the lamb puts himself in the sinner's place. The fact that we have been "reconciled" means that we have been "stripped of what is ours" in an act of substitution. Thus, we have died and risen in Christ[664] . 3. "The fruit of the event of reconciliation can be understood" above all "as *liberation*" from sin, the devil, judgment, etc. (Rom 7; Jn 8:44; 1 Thess 1:10). It is a liberation or "ransom", as happened in Egypt (1 Cor 1:30), "described under the symbol of paying a (high) 'price'" (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23), as payment of a ransom through the gift of life (Jn 10)[665] . This liberation from chains (Lk 13:16; Mt 12:29) is more than the return of lost freedom; it takes place in the Holy Spirit and communicates the Spirit in God" who makes us children of God (Gal 4:6f.). "In its positive sense, it is a question of *insertion into the divine* Trinitarian *life*"[666] . The whole "event of reconciliation refers to the compassionate *love of God*". It is the fruit of God's merciful love and, although it includes the justice of God's covenant, nevertheless, in the first place, it all arises from love .[667]

Theological models elaborated throughout history

With the inalienable nature of these five biblical ideas in mind, Balthasar will now present the principal soteriologies that have arisen throughout history, not in order to make a mere historical overview, but mainly to show how in each of them there are one-sidednesses; and therefore, having lost the tension between the different ideas, they have also lost their dramatic character, that is, they have lacked the dynamism that signified the covenant of God with man and the involvement of both in the process of salvation, even when all the initiative and grace is of God.

1. *The Fathers of the Church.* The patristic soteriology, in spite of its differences, has the common element of being based on the idea of "exchange of place". In the words of Irenaeus : "the Word of God became what we are, so that we might become what he himself is" (*Adv. haer.* V, Praef.)[668] . The Fathers bring into this fundamental

theme all the other themes; for example, that redemption is also "introduction into the divine, Trinitarian life" and that redemption "must be 'paid for'". And, obviously, it all springs from the love of the Father and the personal self-giving of the Son[669] . This theology of exchange, which is sustained by "the full divinity" and "the integral humanity of the mediator of the covenant" (which is also called "*commercium*" [= exchange]) was consolidated in an important way in the Christological disputes of the fourth and fifth centuries which, as is well known, sought to "save the whole soteriological sense of the New Testament '*pro nobis*'"[670] . Indeed, the exchange clearly looks to the *pro nobis,* since "the assumption of a complete human life and subjected to suffering" "points from the beginning to the passion and death". Thus, the Son in the incarnation truly becomes in solidarity "with all humanity whose nature he shares," but only with the passion and resurrection "does he produce real and objective redemption"[671] . The incarnation is a dynamic event since it involves the whole of life, including death.

Balthasar affirms that the Fathers, although they are not aware that they are limiting some aspects of the redemption, nevertheless, from "their Christological conceptions they unconsciously subject it to narrower limits". The most important limitation consists in the fact that the Son, who is "the totally innocent one, by assuming 'the likeness of our sinful nature' (Rom 8:3), can only take from it the consequences of sin", not sin itself[672] . Jesus identifies himself with our reality and assumes our weaknesses, taking upon himself the punishments and consequences of sin; but not sin itself, due to the purity of his condition as Head of humanity.

2. *The Middle Ages*. *Anselm* made famous his interpretation, which tried to elaborate a systematic soteriology where everything could be reduced to a coherent system (with "necessary" reasons, both for believers and non-believers), but with that he aggravated the problem of leaving elements out. The fact that he expressly wanted to leave out the biblical and patristic arguments, in order to reach everyone, exposed him to an overly abstract elaboration and to leave out "the history of salvation in order to base himself only on the God-creation

(*ordo*) relationship"[673] . His scheme is centered on the concept of *satisfaction,* thus privileging the theme of the *ransom,* but without forgetting the other biblical aspects we have mentioned (satisfaction supposes the exchange of the incarnation and is obviously based on the mercy of God).

His model is more complex and nuanced than a cursory reading suggests[674] . For Anselm, sin has destroyed the order of creation, which must be recovered because that order-since it was God's work-reflects both the glory and the freedom and love of God. It is clear that a work of this magnitude must involve "an initiative of the merciful God", but at the same time, an initiative in which the human being is made suitable "to represent the part that corresponds to him", since it is a covenant relationship between God and humanity[675] . Therefore, as

> In God, freedom can only be identified with "righteousness" (*rectitudo*), in which are hidden and framed not only truth and absolute goodness, but also justice and mercy. This is reflected in the order (*ordo*) of the world created by God and for which he himself responds, which brings as a consequence that God is indebted to himself (to his "honor") to eliminate the disorder introduced into that world by created freedom by having recourse to both his justice and his mercy . [676]

To understand this last paragraph well, it is important to keep in mind that the "honor" of God is not the anger of a feudal lord, but something comparable - in a theological aesthetic - to the "glory" of God, and that it is also equivalent to "righteousness" and "order", as expressions of that glory which, in the end, is the mercy of God. Thus then, the incarnation of the Word, as a sending of the Father, is a work of God's exclusive initiative and mercy, but being fulfilled through the human life of Jesus, it is also a work "produced by the man Jesus"[677] . Both possess the initiative, the Father and the Son. Thus, the Word made man lives a life of complete justice until death itself, as proof of his full justice. With this life and death - lived in full human freedom - he has recovered the order of creation and the glory of God. And in this act all humanity takes part "because Jesus is also God, and his action consequently possesses a superabundant dignity and fruitfulness"[678] .

However, for Balthasar, this interpretation that fascinated posterity

also has its limitations, above all, in the fact that Jesus "satisfies" because his death has more weight than all the sins of men, but he himself does not come into contact with the sin of others, nor does he bear our sins; and what is more, "the organic bond" "that the incarnation establishes between Christ and all other men" is missing .[679]

Thomas Aquinas assumes at the center of his "Christological synthesis" "the fundamental idea of Anselm" that "the work of Christ prevails in an incomparable way over all the sins of the world [...] and thus constitutes the perfect 'satisfaction' of them"[680] . But he adds to it "the motives of Scripture and of the Fathers" (merit, satisfaction, sacrifice, redemption); he places the accent "on the love of God who 'inspires' (*inspiravit*) the incarnate Word" with the will to love and self-giving; and he underlines the grace of adoption received. For this very reason he rejects any "idea of a ransom price to be paid to the Powers, or of a penal action to appease the divine wrath"[681] . However, like Anselm, he lacks any intimate contact "between Jesus and the reality of sin as such". But, unlike Anselm, he clarifies the connection "between Christ and humanity" with the idea of "Christ-Head" and of "the *gratia capitis* [= grace of the Head] which is poured out on all the members of the body", since he is "the efficacious mediator between God and men"[682] .

3. *Modern era.* From the emergence of modernity to the present day, with the realization that the old concepts - such as "sacrifice" or "ransom" - were no longer understandable or acceptable to contemporary man and that it was necessary to re-unite the person and action of Jesus with all the rest of humanity, new concepts and ways of understanding have been attempted. From this have emerged the ideas of "solidarity" (which focuses, above all, on the humanity and life of Jesus) and of "substitution" (which focuses, above all, from a Pauline perspective, on the cross of Jesus). However, the two concepts have not been unified.

i. *Solidarity*. This is a concept that, by affirming the psychological rather than the ontological, has a better reception today. Applied to redemption it means that "in Jesus, God himself wants to take part in the whole fabric of human destiny, he simply wants to be there 'for'

man". This is what has been called the "pro-existence" of Jesus, that is, if each person is a "person-with-others", Jesus is, on the other hand, a "person-for-others". Now, given that this "pro" or "for" can be given different values, to Balthasar "this [is] showing that the concept of solidarity" "is not entirely clear, because it can be used in a more or less exclusive or inclusive sense." Indeed, "a number of Catholic authors use the concept of solidarity to express vividly the communion of Jesus with our (sinful) nature"[683] . Now, although this is perfectly correct, the problem is that from there, starting from the "use that liberal Christology will make of it", "the *main* accent will begin to be placed on the solidarity that Jesus lives and teaches with the poor, the sinners and the unclassified, and that he sees in the cross only the ultimate consequence of this social solidarity"[684] . Then, in general, it will be thought that "this idea must replace the today untenable theories of sacrifice and expiation" (Kessler)[685] . And Ch. Duquoc will say that "Jesus renounces his own liberation, because he cares much more about the liberation of others" and thus cooperates with the coming of the kingdom of God. It is evident that this interpretation is based on that "type of exegesis" that affirms that we cannot know anything about the feelings and conscience of Jesus with respect to the meaning that he could give to his death[686] . The death appears rather as the historical consequence of his solidarity with the poor, since "he sees his death as an ultimate and supreme service to the cause of God as the cause of man" (E. Schillebeeckx)[687] . For Balthasar it is clear that this way of interpreting the life of Christ is a consequence of contemporary liberal exegesis and of the concept of autonomy proper to the Enlightenment, in which it is unthinkable that another should liberate me interiorly. Each one is the sole author of his own freedom. A substitution on the ontic plane is impossible, it could only occur on the "social and psychological" plane .[688]

Here Balthasar makes a brief *Excursus on the soteriology of Karl Rahner* , which he considers to belong - in general - to the soteriology of solidarity. However, in expounding this soteriology, it seems to him that in addition "the basic principles nestled in the system" of Rahner are exposed , which, by "adjusting the key structure of theology (with

a philosophy from which it is inseparable) to such a rigid scheme" as the one he elaborates, causes "a number of members of the traditional organism of the Christian faith [to] have to disappear or undergo a total reformulation"[689] . And so it seems to him that also in the soteriology that Rahner elaborates some elements of the traditional organism of faith are left out. Balthasar, then, presents this soteriology in a just manner, but, at the same time, with all its criticisms.

The essential thing is that Rahner rejects "to interpret the '*pro nobis*', especially of the cross of Christ [...] as a vicarious atonement". For him, this idea is unthinkable today when man has a more adequate "understanding of self-redemption". The reasons he gives are twofold. In the first place, historically and exegetically he thinks that "it is not known with certainty whether the pre-Easter Jesus himself already foretold his death [...] as an atoning sacrifice"[690] . And, secondly and more importantly, from a speculative point of view, it seems to him that God, who is "the immutable one, cannot be forced to 'change his mind' under the pressure of a worldly event, as for example the cross of Christ" (an idea he attributes to Anselm). For Rahner , therefore, "God is the reconciled one from all time, the one who, by offering grace, forgives sin and justifies man", and "the incarnation and death of Jesus, consequently, can only be qualified as a final cause", since "Jesus is the (only) man who fully accepts God's self-giving, and this precisely in his situation of death"[691] . In this scheme -then- the "*pro nobis*" must be transferred "from Christ to God himself: God is 'for us', insofar as he offers salvation and nothing else to all as sinners", since Christ is the summit of this reconciliation of God and not the reconciler. Hence, "the universal 'efficacy' of his death refers to the fact that all human destinies are intertwined with one another", where "it is enough that the destiny of one has importance for the destiny of another"[692] . In this sense, their fullness of life influences us as solidarity .[693]

Balthasar then raises his most fundamental objections. First, the fact that, for Rahner , "the idea of vicarious representation [is] 'unthinkable,' precisely because for him the concept of personal freedom, insofar as self-realization of the subject in its totality,

occupies as central a place as it does in Kant." Secondly, if it is not relevant what meaning Jesus attributed to his death (because we cannot know it), but only the fact that he perfectly fulfilled the surrender of God and the reception of man as the highest point of God's reconciliation with humanity, then one can ask why his death has such absolute value. Could there not be other similar deaths? Against that, Balthasar thinks that Rahner "opts for a radical antiochene line, going even to the 'borderline idea' that in the total self-giving of the man Jesus to God and, in turn, in the total (unique-supreme) self-giving of God to Jesus an 'encounter' takes place from which a (kind of) identity emerges"[694] . In other words, he thinks "that Rahner's whole system is about God's absolute '*pro nobis*' for the world in general and for humanity in particular"; and all this, although verified "exclusively in the existence (and death) of Jesus Christ", is not too much affirmed, since the "'hypostatic union' is inscribed in such a way in concrete human nature that it appears only as the 'most accomplished case' of the latter". Thus, his soteriology lacks any drama .[695]

ii. *Substitution.* This model, which arose with *Luther,* in a way came to fill "those gaps left open by the theology of the Fathers in the theory of the *admirabile commercium* [= amazing exchange]". It is a matter of carrying "to its ultimate consequences" "the doctrine of the '*pro nobis*'", "understood as an exchange", but now "not between the divine and created nature", "but between the sinner and Christ the dispenser of grace". It is clear that this thought is based on a quite literal interpretation of 2 Cor 5:21: "He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him". Now, as is well known, in order to understand the meaning of this exchange, Luther has recourse to the nuptial image of Ephesians 5:31 (and Genesis 2:24) in the sense that *faith* "unites the soul with Christ as a bride with her husband", where from this marriage it follows that "Christ and the soul become one body". In this way, continuing with that same image, "the goods of both, grace and disgrace and all things become also common; all that Christ has is proper to the believing soul, and what the soul has becomes the

property of Christ"[696] . Each of the spouses appropriates that which belongs to the other. In this way, Christ, the sinless one, appropriates and makes his own the sins of the believers as if he had committed them himself. But, since his righteousness is stronger than all our sins, the believer is freed and purified from all sin, through the treasure of righteousness that Christ - as spouse - exchanges with us. Christ bears our sins seriously and authentically, becomes the ultimate sinner on earth, and feels the wrath of God and the pains of hell. Whereas the believer, by that exchange, has appropriated and made justification his own, and as a bride lives "adorned with the eternal righteousness of her husband"[697] .

Christologically, this means that Jesus "is the authentic prototype of the *simul iustus et peccator* [= both just and sinner]", since "the assumed human nature is essentially sinful and underlies the judgment of God". Now, as a consequence of this, "the humanity of Christ, bearer of sin and crucified, remains totally passive in the dramatic event", since the victory is God's alone (= the divine part of the hypostatic union). And since anthropology must be "the exact countertype" of Christology[698] , then, if in the nuptial exchange, the *becoming righteous* of man through faith corresponds to the *becoming sin* of Christ, in this exchange must also be affirmed "the absolute priority of the action of Christ in the face of man and also in the face of all human action synchronic of the action of Christ." However, for Balthasar, "it is here that the obscurities and also the inconsistencies of the Lutheran doctrine of exchange begin"[699] . Put very synthetically, it seems to him that there is an incoherence in Luther's approach in having to postulate a "double righteousness" and a "double sin" to resolve precisely the dialectic that occurs between the active in God and the passive in man (which would make a *two-actor* drama properly impossible). Indeed, Luther speaks of "a righteousness acquired by pure faith, in the pure exchange with Christ," but he must add a "second, rigorously separated from the first," which "is to be acquired by virtue of the requirement of holiness inherent in grace, and of the fulfillment of the law." And in relation to this double justice, it must also postulate a double sin: "that which Christ has

destroyed in the exchange with his death" and then "that which man must overcome" in the following of Christ crucified[700] . But, in both cases, the relevant justice and sin in this exchange are the former and not the latter.

> Therefore, if one looks only at the "first righteousness" and the "first sin," it is not possible to speak of Christ and man except in a perfect dialectic, as the communication of languages already showed (in the "situation of alienation"). And since this first point of view is for Luther the decisive one, it follows that the unity of opposites extends to the whole of theology. That is to say, of God one can only speak *sub contrario* [= in the opposite][701]

This is so because, moreover, the second righteousness and the second sin - in practice - must be completely minimized since, otherwise, it would be to fall back into a righteousness that is the product of merits and personal works. In such a way that it must be maintained that the encounter with Christ is always in the *opposite* and, hence, its total dialectic. But all this eliminates, by excessive (God does everything), the dramatic, since a dramatic presupposes persons with a determined ontological constitution, instead here "there is no possibility of knowing if man, as sinner and just, is one or two, and if he is a subject capable of maintaining his own consistency"[702] . Finally, "the reduction of theology to the '*pro nobis*' between Christ and sinners"[703] , makes us lose sight of the historical development and a possible gradual divinization of the human being.

iii. Penal substitution. Among the Fathers of the Church there appears sporadically "the interpretation of the passion of Christ as a *punishment* deserved by us, but suffered 'for us', that is, in our place"[704] . At the time of the Reformation the idea "of the penal suffering of Christ" was common among reformers and anti-reformers[705] . Calvin, for example, speaks of "the translation that imputes to Christ the curse deserved by us," and hence a number of Protestant theologians and exegetes, to this day, speak of the "penal suffering of Jesus"[706] . K. Barth , starting from the classic concept of *commercium,* affirms that God's gift of himself to man is the fact that Jesus is judged in our place - even when this puts his divinity in a critical situation - because then the Son of God suffers that which man had to suffer. Also "Pannenberg joins this tradition" insofar as Jesus "is the one rejected by humanity" and thus "his death becomes an 'inclusive substitution'". And in

Moltmann, "the '*pro nobis*' acquires a much more theological foundation." The whole "human history of perdition" is elevated and assumed in the "Trinitarian history of God himself," which "has its climax in the cross and in the divine abandonment of the 'crucified God'" who bears the guilt of the world[707] . And it does so in a truly substitutive way. This implies that within "the divine life, God is really against God". This is "the passion of absolute love": "the Father suffers the death of the Son" because "an impassive God could not be the God of this world". However, for Balthasar, although there is talk here of pain, "there is little talk of sin as such", because the author is interested above all in the universal hope of salvation, a Christian commitment with a political theology . [708]

And, from a Catholic perspective, we find that three possible interpretations of 2 Cor 5:21 were assumed. That Christ was made sin can mean: (1) that he was made a victim because of sin (Augustine); (2) that he "took on sinful flesh" (Thomas); or (3) that "God treated him as the very quintessence of sin and corruption, along the lines of the scapegoat burdened with sins"[709] .

iv. Other authors. Balthasar still reviews several other authors who, with different contributions and emphases, remain *grosso modo* within the idea of penal substitution and, therefore, help - with their rights and wrongs - to better understand the idea of substitution, and prepare - in the following - the presentation of Balthasar's project[710] . He gives special importance to the work of R. Girard[711] , who speaks of the "mechanism of the scapegoat"[712] . For this author, the idea and function of a scapegoat is at the heart of every culture, since the accumulated disputes and tensions can always be unloaded on a scapegoat so that calm can return to society. Religion in many ways assumes this same principle and transforms it into a sacred one, since it ultimately seeks to placate God. So the novelty of the Bible would be precisely that Jesus fulfills all this in a supreme way - *as a scapegoat* - but in a historical and non-ritual way. With this, he unmasks -with his own justice and peace- as satanic -because of its violence- the religious dimension of humanity and sacrificial ritualism. And thus it purifies humanity, even if it has to suffer its painful consequences.

However, there the cross lost all meaning and, moreover, nothing human could say anything about God anymore. R. Schwager[713] wishes then to complement Girard, affirming that on the cross of the scapegoat -Jesus-, it is indispensable that not only the penalties for the sins, but also the sins themselves, and in a physical and moral sense, are charged. And S. Bulgakow thinks that the possibility of there being a creation and also a justification is based on the primordial fact that Christ *can* bear the sins of the world - as his fundamental presupposition -; and that really happened because Jesus ontologically bears the totality of human nature and thus can empirically appropriate all the sins of humanity.

Dramatic soteriology

Having shown how the redemptive action of Christ has been understood throughout history, Balthasar now devotes another 100 pages[714] to expounding the core of his own soteriological thought, one of his most characteristic contributions. As we have already mentioned, here he is obliged to take up what he himself has said before about the Trinity and several other arguments, because in a certain way this is a theme where the whole work of creation/ redemption is concentrated. He makes a presentation in four moments, which, however, must still be complemented -in a certain sense- with what he will later say in *Theodramatic* V about the *Final Act* and, in particular, what he will say about the meaning and fruits of Jesus' descent into hell -as the culminating moment of his incarnation- and what he will point out there about God's "final embrace" of humanity. Taking all this into account, one can understand well -and in all its complexity- what he teaches here. His attempt evidently seeks to embrace those five indispensable aspects of the New Testament theology of redemption - which have oriented all the historical work referred to - not in a kind of system, but in an integration as a whole. And it seems to me that this objective is well achieved. To this end, he structures his presentation in four aspects, ranging from the Trinitarian core to its efficacy and historical development. First, he shows the Trinitarian background of the whole

event of the cross, indispensable both to understand what happened and how such a thing could have come about. Next, he describes theologically what happened at the moment of the cross and its redemptive significance. Thirdly, he reviews how all this resulted in salvation for human beings, starting with the resurrection and the sending of the Spirit that renews the world. And it ends by showing how the whole of humanity is included in this action, starting with the ministry of the Church.

Trinitarian foundation of redemption

The life of Christ, and in particular his death on the cross, can only be adequately understood from the point of view of faith and considered from its Trinitarian background, that is, if one is able to see, in the light of Scripture, an act of love of the Father in which his Son voluntarily participates in a self-giving for humanity. And although all soteriology necessarily presupposes the question of the hypostatic union, it must also be understood specifically from its Trinitarian foundation.

From the distance of the cross to the intra-Trinitarian distance. One of Balthasar's fundamental theological (and methodological) principles - which we have already exposed- is that the economic Trinity reveals something of what happens in the immanent Trinity, which is its condition of possibility and eternal foundation. From there he can maintain that "it is on the cross and in the abandonment of Jesus on it that the whole distance between the Son and the Father becomes evident for the first time; and the Spirit as the union of the two, their 'we,' appears precisely in the unveiling of unity, as pure distance"[715] . That is to say, if the one who died on the cross is not just another man (without ceasing to be so), but is also the Son of God sent into the world by the Father in a plan of love; Therefore, in that death on the cross the intratrinitarian reality is revealed in a supreme way, as it is the manifestation of the ineffable abyss of love expressed in that paradox which signifies the immense distance from the Father that the Son now suffers, but which, at the same time, is the expression of his deepest and most intimate love which, in that distance, keeps them united through the Holy Spirit. Now, this presupposes that the

immanent Trinity is really the foundation of what happens with the (economic) Trinity in the world, including the passion and death of the incarnate Son, but in such a way that, on the one hand, the immanent Trinity is more than "a simple formal process of divine self-mediation" without true consistency beyond the economy (cf. K. Rahner[716]); and, on the other hand, it is not materially involved "in the process of the world" as if God needed to be involved in the unfolding of history in order to constitute his own identity (cf. Moltmann) .[717]

> On the contrary, the Trinity must be understood as that eternal and absolute self-giving, which makes God appear, already in himself, as absolute love; and it is precisely from here that the free self-giving to the world as love comes to be understood, without God having the least need, for his own becoming (for his "self-mediation"), to involve himself in the process of the world and of the cross .[718]

Having affirmed this principle, Balthasar tries to carry it to its ultimate consequences, always recognizing that the only thing we can know about the Trinity is what the economy reveals to us and that in everything we can understand, the dissimilarity will always be much greater. But one fact is undeniable: God wanted to make himself known to human beings in his love and as love in the incarnation of the Word that culminates in the cross.

2. *The first intradivine kenosis.* Following S. Bulgakow, Balthasar designates "the generation of the Son as a first intradivine 'kenosis' that embraces everything. In effect, the Father completely divests himself of his divinity and transfers it to the Son". This is the concrete way in which God has always existed: by divesting himself of his own divinity in order to give it to the Son, who shares it with him[719] . This eternal act of self-emptying -liberating- of the Father is the generation of the Son, the product of that act of eternal love of the Father. Now, this means two important things: (1) This self-expropriation of the Father produces "an absolute, infinite distance" between the Father and the Son, since the Father, in giving "everything" to the Son, mysteriously, remains divinely "without anything," in a maximum distance from the Son, who receives everything from the Father. This is the transcendent, ineffable and divine distance "in whose bosom all other possible distances, such as can arise in the finite world, without

discarding sin, are understood and embraced". But, in addition, (2) the Son, who possesses consubstantially the divinity as a gratuitous gift of the Father , responds to that "fontal origin" -which is the Father- with an eternal "totally gratuitous and disinterested thanksgiving, just as was the first gift of the Father". Hence, from both of them proceeds, "as their subsistent 'we,'" "the common 'Spirit,' which seals the infinite difference, keeping it at the same time open (as is proper to the essence of love) and acting as the bond of their unity, because it is the one Spirit of both of them." Consequently, assuming what we have said about the immutability of God and discarding "in God all intramundane experience and suffering", this kenosis and distance are those that procure "the conditions that make possible this experience and this suffering until reaching the Christological sphere and its Trinitarian implications"[720] .

3. *Gesture of self-giving as overcoming division.* That the Father can divest himself and surrender his divinity to the Son in such a way that the Son now possesses it "consubstantially" - as his own - reveals a "'separation' in God so inconceivable and insurmountable" that all other worldly separation, however dark and bitter, can only "occur *within* this first gesture of God". This is not to say that there is some kind of identity between what happens in God and what happens in the world, but rather that it is a transcendental *presupposition* that explains what happens later (economically) in the world, but, at the same time, infinitely surpasses it.

> The gesture with which the Father expresses and gives all the divinity (a gesture that not only "makes" him, but "is" him), can, from the moment in which he begets the Son as the infinitely Other of himself, be at the same time the eternal presupposition and overcoming of all that in the world will be division, pain, alienation, but also the giving of love, the possibility of encounter and happiness .[721]

This means, in the first place, that, if the Father *is* the essence of God subsisting as self-donation, that is, that the Father exists only in this form of kenosis, then the Son can only exist "under the mode of reception of this unity of omnipotence and impotence (from the Father)". That is to say, the Son knows himself eternally and essentially as *given,* which is the "absolute presupposition of every possibility of the Son's self-giving to the world," since every self-giving

to the world is already contained and presupposed within this first absolute transcendental self-giving. I would not add "more" self-giving to it, nor can it be a divine mutation. But also, secondly, the Son's response to the Father's generation is an eternal thanksgiving "for the consubstantiality of God-being," that is, an eternal thanksgiving for having been generated. Therefore, in this act of generation is the transcendental presupposition of all worldly creation since, if the Son is the absolute Other of God, in him is transcendentally contained every possibility of the existence of "others" of God. In this eternal thanksgiving of the Son, then, is contained also the recognition of the world to its Creator, since the world "belongs" to the Son, "is formed in view of him" and "cannot be 'recapitulated' except in him." "From here it already follows that every possible mission of the Son in the world (*processio* as *missio* until the cross) acquires all its content within the eternal thanksgiving for a world that" was created in him, "in the context of the eternal 'generation'" of the Son. And, thirdly, the Holy Spirit is the correlation that exists "between the gift that engenders and the availability (to all forgiveness) that gives thanks", as mutual love, as a "we" that is placed "above the totally other that separates", as "identity of the gift that gives and of the gift that is received and that is recognized purely and simply as gift". In this way, the Spirit is the witness of mutual love which, along with fostering "the infinite difference between the Father and the Son" so that love may be expressed to the fullest, is also the one that produces the profound unity in an "unsurpassable love." This then is the transcendental and eternal presupposition of the reunification of the world with its Creator .[722]

With all this, Balthasar's concluding statement can now be better understood:

> With the "emptying" of the Father's heart in the generation of the Son, the whole possible drama between God and any world has been definitively inscribed and assumed; the reason is this: any thinkable world can only have its place within the distinction of the Father and the Son with the unifying difference of the Spirit. The Trinitarian drama has eternal duration: the Father never existed without the Son, nor the Father and the Son without the Spirit. All that is temporal takes place within the framework of the eternal event, as its possible consequence .[723]

Balthasar has offered an "explanation" of this reality which is in all its depths a mystery, in such a way as to rule out any "mythological" involvement of God in the process of the world, but to place adequately in God the conditions of possibility of the world and of its self-manifestation to him .[724]

4. *Creation as a new kenosis of God.* Balthasar calls "a new 'kenosis' of God" the creation of the world and the alliance that he has sealed with all of creation in the very act of creating it, since in that act "God places before himself an authentic created freedom to which he is bound in some way. This kenosis is a kind of limitation that God imposes on himself in the face of created freedom, so that it can be a true freedom, even to the point of opposing God himself. As we have already seen, God acquires a certain form of latency. With that, the human being acquires an autonomy capable of saying yes or (unfortunately) no to God. And this autonomy, once again, has its transcendent foundation in "the way in which the Son receives (unlike the creature in his creation) the autonomy of the divine nature": the Father lets him be Son and waits confidently for his grateful response .[725]

Three consequences can be drawn from this. First, when the human being does not perceive in his own freedom - nor in his whole existence - a gift of God, that is, does not recognize in his own self-determination a gift received, then he arrogates to himself a divine condition that he does not possess, which is his most profound contradiction, having been created precisely in the image of God in the Son. Secondly, God, in his kenosis of creation and covenant, shows a kind of "innate impotence and vulnerability, which are inseparable from one another," since "he endures, in the total helplessness of absolute love, the contradiction with this love and, in the omnipotence of love itself, he cannot and will not tolerate it." And, thirdly, this *no* of the creature to God, that is, "his will to autonomy without dependence and without effusion of self, can have no other context than the encompassing 'yes' of the Son to the Father in the Spirit, since it is the refusal to participate in the autonomy received by the Son"[726] . Therefore, given that the creature always lives "in the

Son" and that the Son remains eternally disposed and attentive to every possible and imaginable form of surrender to the Father, then, in the face of the creaturely non-creaturely, the Son will always find new forms of availability and of totally free and spontaneous offering of himself *pro nobis* to the Father.

Therefore, from that primordial kenosis of the Father, the Trinitarian kenosis of (freely deciding) a creation has arisen, since it implies a self-limitation of God by reason of the freedom of the creature and, even more, by reason of his freely and arcanely decided alliance; and, finally, from there also comes the third kenosis: the incarnation and the cross, as the culmination of the previous one.

Soteriological (= Trinitarian) meaning of the cross

"The most specific mystery of God, through which he reveals and communicates his essence to the world", is that "redemptive *kenosis*" "which consists in the identification of the divine Logos with the man Jesus" who gives himself up to death. And his death on the cross, as the abandonment of the Son by the Father, is based "on the absolute distance that exists between the hypostasis that bestows divinity and the hypostasis that receives it"[727] . We have seen that the world, insofar as it is created and with all its problematicity -including the not guilty to God-, can only subsist within that distance. Therefore, the answer and solution to all negation "can have no other solution than in that place and through it"[728] . Therefore, the Son, by virtue of his place in the Trinity, can assume to the very depths all this negation and, precisely because of this, resolves it definitively. Balthasar explains how this action (and its meaning) is carried out, starting from three aspects.

1. *The "hour" as obedience of love.* We have seen that the "hour", to which Jesus is heading, belongs to his mission as an essential element, which he assumes freely and interiorly.

> But, from the moment that the hour is qualitatively different from everything previous [in his life], insofar as it demands an *interior* assumption of the non-divine and anti-divine and an identification with that darkness hostile to God, to which the sinner arrives by his refusal of God, then the acceptance of the hour can only be experienced under the species of an absolute *super-requirement* that is imposed on him who, by essence, is bound to the Father in

loving obedience .[729]

Here we see that the assumption of the "non-divine" by the one who depends completely and freely on the Father, implies reaching a unique dramatic intensity at the moment of the "hour", because it means an extreme difference between what is experienced and what happens. Indeed, first of all, it is not (in any way) that the Son wants the "no" of humanity to the Father, but his desire - on the contrary - is only to fulfill totally the will of the Father in the mission entrusted to him. However, since this mission freely followed by the Son-which is also the Trinitarian and eternal decision that he had already freely decided to carry out-occurs from the Trinitarian investment and the kenosis of his human life, then he must carry it out through the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, who manifests to him the will of the Father, but in which "the impression is given that the Father [...] bears the sins of the world on the Son's shoulders"[730] . Here "the drama between man and God reaches" its culminating point, because

> perverse freedom projects all its guilt on God as the only accused and scapegoat, and God allows himself to be fully reached, not only in the humanity of Christ, but also in his Trinitarian mission. Here, in the dark mystery of the alienation between God and the sin-bearing Son as the authentic locus of vicarious representation, the all-powerful impotence of God's love is revealed: what comes to be "experienced" is the reverse of what actually happens .[731]

Here Balthasar affirms that Jesus has such a profound experience of the darkness of sin, that, although it certainly is not and cannot be the same as that experienced by a sinner in the situation of rejection of God; nevertheless, it must have been a much darker, more difficult and dense experience than that one, precisely because it occurred in Jesus, in the depth of the hypostatic relationship between Son and Father. Since Jesus is the Son in all things dependent on the Father, the experience of abandonment by his Father must have been the darkest conceivable. "Jesus' abandonment by God" on the cross, though obviously "the opposite of hell," yet at the same time in another sense, "is its perfect fulfillment," even its "supreme culmination"[732] . Here we reach the climax of the drama, where we experience the exact opposite of what is happening. This is the

profound salvific meaning of the "hour" of the Son's abandonment in the darkness of the cross.

2. *The cup of vertigo that the Son himself assumes.* For Balthasar, when Jesus in the Garden of Olives asks the Father to take away from him the cup that he is to drink (Mk 14:36), he is referring to the cup of God's wrath, which is mentioned so many times in the Old Testament and which becomes interior to the one who drinks it. And to properly understand what is meant by the "wrath of God" or the "cup of his wrath," it is important to remember that throughout Scripture it appears very clearly that "God is angry with the sinner because of his sin. Beyond all that must be guaranteed about the immutability of God, it is also important to affirm that "a God who did nothing but love and hated no evil [...] would contradict himself"[733] . On the other hand, we know that in the Old Testament the idea of God's "wrath" or "anger" is related to "zeal" for the covenant or for his chosen people, that is, "God's anger is the irruption of the Holy Spirit who asserts and imposes his claim to absolute sovereignty" (Fichtner), but "always within the framework of his grace and his covenant of love"[734] . And this is a feature that remains in the image of the New Testament God.

> Precisely the most intimate revelation of God's heart is demonstrating his absolute decision to oppose everything that hurts his love. And it is precisely the Trinitarian figure of this revelation of love in Jesus Christ that allows us to glimpse the need to link love and anger. The anger of Jesus, which is unleashed on so many occasions, is inflamed every time resistance is put up to his mission and the demands it entails, and thus offends the love of the Father revealed to him, and the Spirit of the Holy Trinity .[735]

Indeed, in Jesus, as God's representative, God's anger must also be present as an expression of his love. Thus, in the New Testament we see that Jesus has expressions of anger that show precisely that he is a divine presence, and furthermore, the greater the love, the greater the anger at that which opposes love. This anger is also an expression of his commitment to the mission of the kingdom. Therefore, even more strongly than in the prophets, Jesus is also devoured by the zeal of Yahweh. And, like the prophets - but to a supreme degree - he suffers the consequences of man's rejection of God, and so he must suffer the divine wrath to be poured out upon him, as mediator and as part of his mission. Therefore, Balthasar affirms that God's wrath is poured

out on the crucified one "because Jesus had already been during his life the revealer of the whole *pathos* of God, that is, of his love as well as of his wrath against the scorn of his love, and now he has no choice but to bear the ultimate consequences of his mediation, which surpasses that of the prophets, 'in such a way that what he suffered then for Israel's sake and for our sake, that is, the wrath of God which we had deserved, he suffered for Israel and for us' (Barth)"[736] .

But the most important thing is that the wrath and love of God here have become one, since "the object of the just wrath of God is resituated in the Trinitarian relationship of love between the Father and the Son"[737] because, on the cross, Jesus, as Son, perfectly fulfilled the will of God and, at the same time, by his incarnation and human life became completely in solidarity with men. In this way, the Son, with his obedience and love for the Father, realized in complete solidarity with human beings, had to taste the totality of God's abandonment, precisely because he knows what full unity with God is. Although it seems almost a contradiction - God against God himself - in reality what happens is that the darkness of the world has been taken over by "the intra-Trinitarian light" and there occurs "like a miracle of transfiguration", in the sense that "the distance caused by the 'no' of sin is overcome and transformed by the obedient distance of the divine 'yes'. God's anger against the denial of his love points to a divine love, that of the Son, who exposes himself to this anger, disarms it and leaves it totally without object"[738] . All that has been said, which is based on Scripture, in no way pretends to fully understand a mystery that transcends us absolutely.

3. *The necessary ecclesial mediation.* Having made clear the action of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the events of the passion and, in particular, the way in which Christ assumed our sins, Balthasar now pauses for a moment to consider "how sinners, by virtue of this action which is the very quintessence of their sin, can in turn become participants in the grace of God and attain their freedom as children of God. This is an essential element, since God has always related to humanity on the basis of a covenant, in which both *partners* have had to participate. Although everything is God's grace, from the moment

that the human being has been created with a (finite) freedom, he has also been given the initiative of his own response to God. This is where Mary's role comes in. Indeed, the covenant with the people of Israel "was something too positive and definitive" so that now there is only evil and sin in Israel. Of course there was the faith of Abraham and of so many righteous people, and, above all, "this faith has already reached its culmination in the 'yes' of the humble slave" when the incarnation came. This "yes" represents the pure faith of the people, is "the proof that God has not sealed his covenant in vain" and "prefigures the future Church"[739] , in such a way that "a decisive role must necessarily correspond to her on the cross, namely, that of mediation between the unfaithful partners of the covenant [...] and the future partners who will come to faith through the grace of the 'slain lamb'"[740] . She does not represent humanity - because she is obviously represented by Christ - but her faith is a personal act that radiates over all humanity as a figure of the future Church. From this realization, Balthasar can describe Mary's role in the cross and redemption.

"If Mary gave her unconditional 'yes' to the incarnation and to all its consequences, among which the cross is the most important, she did so 'in the name of the whole human race,' of sinners, therefore of those who, as such, reject the incarnation"[741] . Now, this solidarity with all sinful humanity implies that she "is relegated 'to the last place' *behind* the last of sinners, with whom Mary does not refuse to be in solidarity"[742] . That is why she shares with the Son the abandonment of the cross, by receiving on the cross another son, instead of her own. But she also shares in the poverty that expropriates her of all her possessions during her life. And it is precisely in that solitude and poverty - which reached its extreme on the cross - that she becomes the bride of the slain Lamb who spreads herself Eucharistically. There, on the cross, with her "yes" - active since the incarnation - on behalf of all humanity, she is the Church's response on behalf of all those who do not respond, thus welcoming the Word of God who dies for them[743] . In this way, the passion of the mother is not associated - neither directly nor subordinately - with that of the Son, but God, from his

omnipotence, brings forth from virginity "the motherhood of the Virgin who makes the whole world fruitful; and this he does only through her incarnate Son," who makes the womb of Mary-Mother-Church a fruitful response to the seed of God[744] . We will return to the role of Mary and the Church later on .[745]

Renewal of the human race

The salvific work of Christ does not end with his death, but continues with the resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit who renews us internally. This does not mean that we have forgotten that, between his death and resurrection, in the silence of Holy Saturday, the descent of Jesus into hell took place, an event that has its own very important soteriological function. But since its main objective is eschatological, we will present it in the last chapter, just as Balthasar also does. Here, instead, we will show - below - the fruits of Easter Sunday for the present (and eschatological) life of humanity.

1. *Inversion from distance to unity and our incorporation into it.* What happens fundamentally at Easter is the most radical inversion, from that "supreme distance between the Father and the Son" on the cross - which we have mentioned-, to "the closest intimacy", although "this intimacy has always existed, because distance is nothing more than the fruit of obedience in Trinitarian love, where the Father and the Son do not cease to be one in the Spirit"[746] .

> Within the framework of the identity (immutable in the bosom of the immanent Trinity) of the absolute obedience of the Son, which in the salvific economy reaches the most absolute abandonment, above the solitude of sin, the most radical inversion takes place, from death to eternal life, from the absolute night of the spirit to absolute light, from the most insurmountable distance and estrangement to the closest closeness that could be imagined . [747]

This profound *reversal,* which is the recovery of eternal intimacy-which, immutable as it is in the immanent, had been economically transformed into obedience and abandonment (which was also an economic form of (de)showing that same profound unity)-is now the manifestation of the glory of the risen Son who, as John himself perceives, has shown that the crucifixion was also the glorification of the Son (Jn 12:27-28), since it was the culminating moment of the

recovery of his glory and the manifestation of full unity with the Father. However, there is also something new: the Son has now recovered that glory and unity *with* his humanity which is fully glorified for eternity. Thus, through his surrendered and glorified humanity, the possibility opens up for all human beings to share henceforth in his flesh and blood, which will enable them to "participate [forever] in the essential infinity of his divine person"[748] . Indeed, since the immanent Trinity is identical with the economic Trinity, it can be affirmed that what has happened in the economic Trinity is as eternal as what happens in the immanent Trinity and, therefore, maintains its actuality eternally. This will mean then that the humanity of Christ will remain perpetually open and welcoming to sinners through his surrendered body and his sacramentalization, which are producing -until eternity- the passage from separation from sin to the love of sons.

Thus, because of this inversion, from now on the incarnate Son lives his life in God and for God (Rom 6:10), with full freedom and having been constituted judge of the world above all principality and power (Eph 1:21f.) thanks to his extreme obedience to the Father. "The freedom of the Risen One is manifested in the suppression of what we have come to call 'the Trinitarian inversion', which is nothing more than Jesus' docility to the Spirit who indicates to him the will of the Father". From now on he disposes of the Holy Spirit and gives him to the world. We know that, economically, "the Spirit was in and upon Jesus," guiding him and indicating to him the will of the Father; now, however, he sends him with freedom, since "it is *his* Spirit, a Spirit both of freedom and of obedience to the Spirit"[749] . Now, with this Spirit, according to Paul, Jesus also communicates his sonship (Gal 4:4), since by communicating his Spirit to us he grafts us into himself and into his destiny. This is explained by the fact that the Son - who has been generated by the Father - economically manifests this filiation in his obedience, then, by communicating to us this Spirit of obedience, he also communicates to us his own filiation. Therefore, the giving of the Spirit is identical with the gift of sonship. All this implies for the human being two mutually interrelated characteristics,

which Balthasar will review below: the liberation of the human being and his divinization (which includes his configuration with the death and resurrection of the Son).

2. *Liberated freedom.* Based on what he has already explained at length in *Theodramatica* II about finite freedom and its relation to infinite freedom, here he deals specifically with what redemption has meant for human freedom. From Scripture we know that the redemption was a liberation from the powers of evil (Mt 12:28ff; Lk 13:16; Paul)[750] , which is always a mystery because it has to do with God - in what is opposed to God - but in sum it means that the cross of Christ has destroyed everything that prevents us both from approaching God and from developing a life with full freedom. That is, in spite of all the strength that evil - whether it be sin, the devil, hell or death - may have, it has been conquered on the cross and through the cross. Now, this liberation can be translated in a more comprehensible way-and in its deepest meaning-with the biblical concepts of "grace, divine filiation and being born of God"[751] . Indeed, the central aspect of liberation lies precisely in the fact that it is a gift or grace of God, and is more than a simple recovery of something lost. If we remember that the freedom received at creation is already a gift of God composed of two poles (the capacity to decide for oneself and openness to the totality of good), then this implies that it must be open to other freedoms, make room for them and give them love. But, above all, it implies that freedom must be recognized as received from God, as a gift. If this is so, then freedom can only be authentically affirmed in itself and in love when it recognizes that it owes itself entirely to God and recognizes that, for this very reason, it also owes itself to others, who are equally fruits of God's gift of love. Therefore, to live starting from oneself, but without the recognition that one's own life has been given to him, is what is called sin and is thus also a total contradiction of oneself. Consequently, since finite freedom - because it is finite - cannot dispose for itself of absolute freedom, its "no" to absolute freedom - which is precisely to claim that - can likewise only be liberated by the same absolute freedom that turns to man as grace and gift. This is why freedom and grace are in such a

profound relationship: because freedom is a gift and its liberation is also a grace. And all that God gives is himself, that is, divinization .[752]

In order to understand well this mystery of human freedom and of the divine grace that strengthens it, in addition to what we have just said, it is important to understand the relationship between nature and grace. In the New Testament it is shown that "the authentic motive of creation" was God's desire "to reveal himself to the free creature and in this way to communicate himself (God cannot reveal himself without giving himself)"[753] , in such a way that the human being does not have the possibility - nor the right - to demand that God manifest himself. God is completely free to do so or not. However, he himself has decided to create the human being precisely because he wishes to self-communicate to him. This is a truth that has become known only because it has actually happened. And it is a great paradox, since the creature needs God, who can be welcomed only if he himself, with absolute freedom, decides to show himself and give himself to the creature himself. Therefore, the only way to think of "the free communication of God to the creature made free by him" is to recognize in that communication the "overcoming and consummation" "of the philosophical-'natural' law of the perfect immanence of God in his total transcendence," always recognizing that we are within a mystery that surpasses us. This means that,

> [just] as in the order of creation, the creature endowed with freedom cannot be thought of "outside" of God [.......] but in him, in its own infinite spaces of freedom, guided by God, accompanied and totally penetrated by him, to the point that its being-before-God grows in the same measure as its being-in-God; In the same way, on the level of the personal revelation of God to his free creature, neither can it be accepted that a personalism suddenly take shape that is unilaterally centered on the finite, where God would appear simply as the "you" or the "Other" of myself, disregarding the fact that in this horizon the personal categories gain in prominence. The Augustinian formula *"interior intimo meo et superior summo meo"* [= more interior than the deepest of me and more elevated than the highest of me] remains valid in its double variant .[754]

If on the natural plane, since God is "Not-Other" -that is, totally transcendent-, for this very reason he can be immanent to every creature (without being a creature or being confused with anything categorical), precisely because nothing can subsist outside God; Therefore, on the plane of grace and of God's communication to the

free creature, God can also communicate by becoming immanent in the creature -transforming the human being-, but at the same time maintaining his condition of being absolutely transcendent, which is beyond every creature and which cannot be confused with anything of the creature. This is the great mystery of God, which makes the graced human being also an unfathomable mystery. God is the innermost part of the human being, not being part of the human being. From this most mysterious immanence of God in the creature, created freedom is liberated precisely from its transcendence in divine freedom.

3. *Divinization of the free creature.* To explain this transformation and fullness of created freedom, the Greek fathers elaborated the concept of "divinization". This meant that the human being, although being created was exactly non-divine, could nevertheless receive all the gifts that God, in his infinite love and freedom, wanted to give him. Indeed, the human person is a creature, but he can participate in divine goods - that is, in God himself - which naturally endows him with divine qualities (Irenaeus)[755] . Now, this is possible thanks to - or to put it another way, the presupposition of all this is - the creation of the human being as the image of God, which must be rigorously just that, a "precondition" and not a requirement. This "(permanent) precondition" "founds and makes possible the unfolding of the creature itself toward its '*likeness*' to God, for this likeness cannot be conceived without the idea of an inner participation in the essence, that is, in the intra-Trinitarian life of God-love"[756] .

> The supernatural elevation of finite freedom, aroused by the offer made by infinite freedom to participate in its own life, remains a mystery; and it is so, because the creature, although this mystery touches it in its most intimate nature, has not the slightest possibility (not even speculative) of transforming this offer into a constituent of its finitude .[757]

This is the divinization to which every creature is called by a creational design; divinization that means - negatively - freedom from all slavery and - positively - development and fullness until reaching the likeness of God. Now, this divinization can be understood only from the point of view of Christology, since it is the fruit -also mysterious- of the incarnation of the Word. We can also understand it as the final result and the ultimate consequences of the God-creature

exchange. Moreover, it is one of the (possible) fruits of the "distance" that arose in the generation of the Son, because it is the assumption of the creature from a distance, in order to bring it to intimacy, taking into account that first the descent of the Word took place, and only then came the ascent of the creature. The anthropological consequence is that, in that exchange, created freedom, from its being-itself, discovers that only within the absolute being-itself of God, it finds its fullness and archetype, in such a way that, in that archetype and absolute freedom, it can develop from itself now in absolute and true freedom; indeed, it realizes that it must do so because there it finds its ultimate identity, which is exactly the opposite of all alienation.

Finally, if divinization has its foundation in the exchange of the incarnation, which culminates in the passion, then the gradual process of divinization - or of "becoming like him" (another patristic concept) - must coincide with the following of Christ and with identification with his sentiments (Phil 2). Now, this cannot be understood as a simple "repetition" of his historical way of life, since the identification is with the Risen One, that is, it is an identification with Christ throughout his life, and particularly with his most dense moments. Therefore, in the last analysis, identification with Christ, the living in Christ (of St. Paul), is identification with the death and resurrection of Christ. It could be said then that the person is divinized by dying and rising every day with Jesus (Rom 6:8), and also in communion with his sufferings (2 Cor 1:5-7). Therefore, divinization as following is also in some way a participation in the *pro nobis* of Jesus on the cross. This opens the way to the next and last point.

Inclusion of all in the passion of the Son

Balthasar concludes with an important reflection, which explains how the Church can be integrated into the event of the cross, particularly from her Eucharistic condition, and how, from this, believers can also participate in Jesus' "for us". In other words, how Christ includes us internally in his passion, not only in the fruits, but also in his intercessory capacity for others. This reflection is an obligatory task, since every relationship of God with the human being

is under the characteristics of the covenant, where both parties necessarily have to act, even though one is the one who has all the initiative and the other party must only welcome and respond with his created freedom (although that same response is also a work of God's grace). It is thus essentially an act of two. Now, since to speak of a certain human participation in Christ's redemptive sacrifice is a controversial topic, Balthasar devotes quite a few pages to it. Here we will present only the fundamental lines of his thought, without going into detail. In any case, he had already referred to this topic in *Theodramatics* III, when he expounded some ideas on the *Inclusion in Christ* and, later, when he spoke about the *Theological Characters.*

1. *Participation in the passion through (and in) the Eucharist.* A particularly controversial topic - and the most complex - is the justification of the Eucharist as a true sacrifice, that is, the incorporation of the Church into the sacrifice of Christ. Balthasar will explain this "integration of the Church into the event of the cross in a leisurely, gradual way, distinguishing five moments." (1) First of all, a basic and evident affirmation, which takes up everything said above: if Christ has suffered "for us", then all those for whom Christ has died - that is, all humanity - "have been transformed in their being and placed in another dimension", even before they know it or are aware of it[758] . (2) That transformation occurred and is historically situated in time, but, moreover, since it is an event in which the Trinity participates, and everything that happens with the Trinity economically "remains inscribed in the immanent Trinity," then that action *for us* continues to be present today in history, above all, through the Holy Spirit that has been poured out in the world. Now, and this is the second thing, that permanent presence of Christ's redemptive act on the cross is consummated at every moment "by the permanent re-presentation of Christ *bodily* given 'for us'"[759] , that is, it is concretized each time by the re-presence of his whole *bodily* life, but in particular, by his cross and resurrection-as the culmination of his sacrificial offering-which he himself linked to the Eucharistic supper. In this way, there remains an actual relationship between the historical supper, the cross and the Eucharistic supper that is

celebrated. The Eucharistic celebration is thus an ecclesial action that makes manifest and present Jesus' act of offering, but it is *also* a sacrificial event. The question that immediately arises is obvious: is it really a properly sacrificial act?

(3) The next step, therefore, is to show why and how "in the Eucharistic celebration, [the Church] does not offer to God only an 'alien' sacrifice, that of Christ, but participates interiorly in it"[760] . Balthasar affirms that three things must be fulfilled for this to happen. First, that the faithful who participate in the Eucharistic celebration recognize that Christ's sacrifice has indeed brought about a change in all humanity. It is faith in his redemptive act, which now implies on our part his existential following. The second thing-which in fact is fulfilled-is that "there is a moment in which this inchoative act of the community [faith and following] is already fully accomplished: it is that of Mary's 'yes' at the foot of the cross, where this 'yes' becomes the most painful assent to the sacrifice of her Son." She is the perfectly accomplished synthesis of the Old Testament expectation and the birth and radical model of the Church's faith. "Insofar as this 'yes' was the presupposition for the incarnation of the Son, it can be one of the indispensable elements at the foot of the cross"[761] . In this, she is the successful figure of the Church that lets God act and lead her where and how he wills. Now, just as the Son, upon becoming incarnate, gives himself helplessly into the hands of Mary so that she may take care of him and offer him to the world; in the supreme moment of this incarnation, where he must leave everything in the hands of the Father, it can be said that the Son returns, once again, in an analogous way, to leave in the hands of Mary - figure of the Church - his Eucharistic surrender and offering, so that the Church may dispose of himself and his sacrifice, giving himself to the Church. Mary-Church, as bride and mother at the foot of the cross, welcomes the fruitfulness of Christ and in this way she herself becomes fruitful as a mother who gives her Son to the world. "Thus and only thus can it be said that, in the Eucharist, the community is integrated into the sacrifice of Christ and that this perfect sacrifice is offered to God by the head and the members". And the third thing, a consequence of the above, is to

understand "the 'do this in remembrance of me' as Jesus' indication for an action proper to the Church, which can take place where he himself, in the passion, becomes the passive subject of which it is disposed"[762] . This implies that the Church can never feel that she is the owner of the Eucharist, but that she will always be the one who serves it obediently. Finally, it must be said that the three things mentioned above, in fact, with all their limitations, are basically fulfilled every day.

(4) Now, on the part of "the believing community," the offering "of the sacrifice of Christ to God the Father in the Holy Spirit" must consist, "first of all, in uniting itself to the dispositions of Christ himself as *eucharistia, that* is, as a celebration of thanksgiving"[763] . This means that an essential element - an indispensable one - for the community celebrating the Eucharist is that it be carried out with the same sentiments as Christ (Heb. 13:10-16), that is, that the community offer itself as a "sacrifice of praise". This implies an explicit adherence to Christ's action of *giving himself as a substitute for* sinners and thus showing his extreme love for the Father. (5) Now it is true that the community that offers the Eucharistic sacrifice identifies (or should identify) with Christ's sentiments of offering, imitating him in his self-giving on the cross and following him along that same way of the cross. But we must be aware that this movement from below to above has been preceded long before by the movement from above to below, that is, by the same sacrifice of Christ on the cross, which has transformed us internally and changed our state. The first is not our sacrifice, but the sacrifice and substitutionary death of Christ for us, in which "we have all died: this is the key reality"[764] . And both movements - always preserving the primacy of Jesus - are articulated in an ineffable way. Thus, this offering of Christ's sacrifice by the whole Church has its archetype in the offering of Mary in the incarnation and on the cross - as faith and personal surrender to a prior initiative of the Son - in such a way that in the Eucharist the Marian has primacy over the liturgical, which is only ministerial.

2. *Participation in the "pro nobis" of Christ.* Believers, along with offering Christ's sacrifice and uniting themselves to him, also become

united with all humanity in the same redemptive act of Christ. Indeed, "the insertion of believers into the Body and thus into the work of Christ necessarily has the consequence that, in the secondary way described above, they take part in his 'for us'"[765] . This means that believers - who are already naturally in solidarity with one another by virtue of their 'being in common' - fulfill their solidarity and offer themselves more profoundly for the world, thanks to the fact that Christ has recapitulated them in his person through his incarnating and redeeming action. Incorporation into Christ "signifies, in the order of creation, an unimaginable enlargement of the individual's field of action," who is no longer a simple isolated being, but is now articulated within the "organism and in the vital movement of the Mystical Body." In this way, believers also have "certain possibilities of efficacy within the internal framework of the freedom of the other members of Christ," possibilities that are only understood by being all within Christ and that, therefore, refer only to positive things and for the good. These possibilities of influence are not thinkable as applicable for evil, that is, there can be no solidarity -properly such- in sin[766] . Sin excludes any solidarity. There may be temptation, but not solidarity. On the other hand, solidarity in the good can extend *ad infinitum,* that is, in principle everything remains open and the control of it will depend only on God himself, but certainly all can be filled with the hope that his intercessory power can extend to the innermost region of the freedom of the other, for example, to his deepest conversion. This is certainly an unfathomable mystery, but even so, in principle, the measure of that influence must be thought of as fundamentally unlimited, even if it requires the whole Church, filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, it must never be forgotten that the *freedom* of the other will always remain irreducibly in front of one.

Finally, Balthasar recalls that the foundation of the *communio sanctorum* [= communion in holy things] is common participation, both in the sacraments (as appears in the Apostolic Creed, around 400), and in what the other members of the *communio* produce, thanks to the strength and identification with Christ, which that same

participation in the generous love of Christ gives. This common participation is what makes us members of one another and, moreover, what enables us to act effectively for the good of one another. Whoever receives a sacrament thereby receives a good common to all, the fruit of which therefore belongs to all[767] . Moreover, every grace received by each of the members of the Body redounds to the good of the others, as Paul affirms with regard to the charisms. Now, the limits and differences between *being* for one another and *acting* for one another are not delimitable: here the principle, already outlined several times throughout the *Theodramatic*, about the mutual implication between *esse* and *agere*, is fully fulfilled. We must recognize that every charism - by principle - has a universal character and, therefore, includes, if not actual effective action for the good of others, at least the loving availability to service for all. The being and acting that bears fruit for others is necessarily transferred from one to another .[768]

VII. The Holy Spirit in the Church and the world

In the chapter on the Trinity, by referring to *The Holy Spirit as a person and his own particularity,* and then to *The common work of the Son and the Spirit* (all of which are examined in *Theology* III), we already presented an important part of Balthasar's pneumatology. Thus, in this chapter, we will refer only to his economic action in the world and in the Church. But it is important to keep in mind two previous elements. Although Balthasar dedicates *Theology* III, *The Spirit of Truth,* to a kind of pneumatology -insofar as the Spirit introduces us into "the full truth" (Jn 16:13)-, we cannot forget that he had already reflected on the Holy Spirit in several previous moments of his Trilogy, as well as in some of his other works[769] . Therefore, he does not intend to give here an exhaustive description of the doctrine on the Holy Spirit -which is clearly present throughout the *Trilogy*- but only to present the role of the Spirit within the *Theology, that* is, within the existential understanding of revelation, which implies showing his economic action after the resurrection of Jesus. For our part, these being precisely Balthasar's emphases, and having already explained how he understands the person of the Holy Spirit -at the economic and intra-Trinitarian level-, we will now focus -and limit ourselves- to his economic action, as "explainer" of God through the Son.

According to Balthasar's basic outline, we will divide this chapter into two main parts. The first presents the most distinctive characteristics of the Spirit who, from his economic action, manifests himself as the "explainer" (hence his characteristics of gift, freedom and witness); and the second part shows more concretely his action in the Church (objectively and subjectively) and in the world. It ends with a sort of conclusion, showing the ultimate purpose of the action of the Spirit as a conductor or guide towards the Father.

The Holy Spirit as explainer of God through the Son

Presuppositions for a theology of the Spirit

Before exposing the central elements that have led Balthasar, starting from John's theology, to define the Holy Spirit as the "explainer," it is important to consider four theological presuppositions that will help us to adequately orient this theology, since the Spirit possesses very peculiar characteristics, which must be duly taken into account for a correct pneumatological doctrine.

1. It is easy to realize, already in a first reading of the Bible, that it "speaks of the Holy Spirit in many ways-representing him partly as an apparently impersonal force , partly as a personal subject". This means that, in a certain sense, he can be "objectified" in order to understand him, but, in another sense, he is precisely that through which one can understand the object of revelation, which is necessarily Christ as the incarnate Word[770] . This brings to light a first characteristic that is absolutely essential for any theology of the Spirit. It is that every pneumatology must also be an introduction to Christology, since if the existence of Christ "is animated by the Spirit in all the stages of its perceptibility" and is only comprehensible in its authentic Trinitarian truth and "'objectifiable' in faith animated by the Spirit"; then not only does the Spirit explain the Son, but it is also indispensable to know who the Son is (that is, Christology) in order to know who and how the Spirit is who leads him and manifests him in this way. Hence the consequence that the Spirit normally remains "in 'anonymity,'" which is demonstrated in iconography. Indeed, "the contradiction of a person being represented in an impersonal way (as a dove, as wind and fire) demonstrates our inability to lay hands on the Spirit", and for this reason there is also "no [theological] discourse *on* the Spirit, because the Spirit is above all the divine *subject* of theology and ecclesial life (Jean Yves Lacoste)"[771] .

Balthasar deduces a second important presupposition. Since, through the Holy Spirit, we can glimpse in Christ something of God (= of the Father), and that is demonstrating "that the Spirit belongs to the side of God"[772] , that is, is divine; then every discourse that we make about God needs to be made *in* the Spirit, since "the natural man does not grasp what is proper to the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 2:14; cf. 1 Cor

2:6-16) and only the Spirit *introduces* us into the divine. And yet it will always be an objective and comprehensible discourse, because the Pneuma speaks "from the place where the divine Logos (*Theo-Logos*) is flesh and the language of God can be translated into human language"[773] , as we have already mentioned above[774] . For Balthasar, this is a basic criterion for doing theology: the Holy Spirit sheds light on the Incarnate One, who interprets the Father for us as Other united to him.

> The Spirit never shows Himself or puts Himself in the light; He is always the Spirit of the Son and of the Father, on whose love He sheds His light, without the source of that light manifesting itself as such . [775]

This reveals all the richness and, at the same time, the difficulty of a theology of the Spirit: it will always have an indirect, Christological and spiritual character.

3. "The Son as incarnate was, as has been indicated, the adequate explanation of the Father; but this explanation remained closed to men as long as 'the Spirit did not come' (Jn 7:39)"[776] , so that the Spirit, besides having to be divine in order to explain the truth of the Son and the Father, must wait until Jesus completely fulfills his mission -finishes his life- to be able to explain it in its totality and fullness; that is, we had to wait for Christ himself to send the Spirit, once he is resurrected. But, in addition, the most proper and profound thing about the Son is his relationship with the Father , whom he manifests through all his works and words. Therefore, the Holy Spirit has no other way of authentically explaining the Son to us than to introduce us, through those very words and actions, "into the living depths of the relationship between the Father and the Son," that is, in the words of Paul, to make us sons in the Son (Eph 1:5)[777] . And this is possible because "the sphere between Father and Son, which he introduces, is in a certain sense himself": he is "the love between Father and Son, but in such a way that, at the same time, he is its fruit (and thus its witness)"[778] .

4. A last important presupposition refers to the fact that "the truth that is manifested in Christ" - as the Word of God - "is infinite", but since this truth has appeared in a phenomenon limited in time and space, then its explanation "will be endless" throughout history[779] .

And that explanation has then some characteristics: it will be realized by continually showing new forms of that infinite totality *in* the concrete, and also not starting from peripheral things; they will always be explanations from the center of the revelation, which enrich in a new and unexpected way both the theoretical and the practical of the revelation of Jesus. At the same time, it must be said that this event of the explaining Spirit, as well as occurring in the Church through incorporation into the Body of Christ and divinization by the Spirit, also occurs throughout the world as a kind of *Pneuma spermatikon* [= seminal Spirit], together with the presence of the *Logos spermatikos* [= seminal Word].

These four theological presuppositions for a pneumatology can help us understand from the outset the difficulties that any elaboration of a doctrine of the Holy Spirit must face, both because it is difficult to isolate pneumatology from the rest of the theological treatises, and because of the need - much more radical than in Christology - to elaborate it in the manner of a description of his economic action.

From a biblical perspective

Despite the fact that in the New Testament (prepared by the Old Testament) there are various ways of expressing the presence, action and very being of the Spirit, nevertheless, Balthasar -following John- thinks that the general and all-encompassing concept to describe -from the economy- the Spirit in a just way is that of "introducer" and "explainer"[780] , since all the other concepts and articulations find their most adequate expression in this Johannine concept which is the culmination of the theological development of the Spirit in the New Testament.

1. *In the Old Testament,* from its "strict monotheism", in the "self-revelation of God", when one speaks of the "Spirit of Yahweh" and the "Word of Yahweh", it is rather a question of equivalent expressions, in such a way that, "theologically speaking, the Word of God and the Spirit of God [...] refer to the same divine 'truth' (objectively) or 'veracity' (subjectively)"[781] . God reveals truth-and is also credible-with his Word and with his Spirit, which, although in some way differ "as relatively distinguishable modes of his self-revelation," nevertheless,

"even then it must be kept in mind that God always gives himself, in his Spirit and also in his Word, as an indivisible whole"[782] . Thus we find that in the Old Testament revelation, when God, through the prophets, addresses his Word to the people, this word is always under the inspiration of the Spirit and of his powerful presence as "*dynamis* [= power] that inhabits [that same] Word of God" (cf. Is 59:21). This is why divine "Wisdom" - a later concept in the Old Testament - can also be identified with both the Word and the Spirit[783] . Now, what is important in all this is that this mutual relationship of Word and Spirit will be prolonged later in the New Testament in the fact that Jesus will be conceived, led and inspired by the Spirit of the Father and, after his resurrection, Jesus will send that same Spirit-which is his own Spirit and also the Spirit of the Father-into the world.

2. *Paul* has a well-developed pneumatology, "rich and differentiated"[784] . Two affirmations are relevant in his thought. Starting from the Trinitarian revelation of the plan of salvation, he affirms that "the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5) so that we might be transformed more and more into the image of the Son (2 Cor 3:18), by means of that same Spirit who has been given to us as a pledge (2 Cor 5:5). For Paul, following Christ means allowing ourselves to be made one with Christ through baptism, which introduces us into the death and resurrection of Christ. The Spirit introduces us into the divine life, through Christ, who makes us understand divine truth. And that is his second statement: the *understanding* of divine truth is linked to and, to a certain extent, is equivalent to the *introduction* into divine truth. And both are inseparable from "illumination through baptism, which is the work of the Spirit" (cf. 1 Cor 12:13; 2 Cor 1:21-22) .[785]

> But with this the step has already been taken from the Spirit as "explainer" of truth to the Spirit as "introducer" into *life* according to that truth, which alone provides true understanding . [786]

Thus, for Paul, the only thing that grants true knowledge of divine truth is the introduction *into* the divine life, which implies both justification and sanctification through the work of the Spirit-which objectively transforms the believer-and the acceptance of the charisms

that the same Spirit can give for the service of the Church and the world. And all this is possible because the Holy Spirit, acting in the hearts of the faithful, gives them an interior law, which identifies them internally with the obedience of the Son for their daily following.

3. *In the Synoptics* we find "three [common] statements about the Spirit"[787] , which show the importance of the relationship of Jesus and the Spirit. (1) The baptism of Jesus, as an event without parallel in the Old Testament, which is a theophany that "defines Jesus" "as the one who baptizes with the Spirit"[788] , a mission that the Father endorses with his own word. In that scene "the inseparability of Word and Spirit is emphasized, the Word that as Word of the Spirit explains God and itself"[789] . (2) "The warning against blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" indicates in Jesus "the certainty that he not only speaks, but acts in the Holy Spirit", because by recognizing that a higher power (= the Spirit) is at work in him, even if they do not want to recognize him as Son, they have confirmed that he is filled with the Spirit[790] . (3) The statement that the Spirit will teach them everything they have to say in times of tribulation shows that it is clear to Jesus that, after his death, the Spirit will continue his work "as the trustworthy interpreter"[791] . Matthew even calls him "the Spirit of your Father" (Mt 10:20).

Luke develops pneumatology even more extensively. From "the ecclesial experience of the Spirit," Luke looks back on the life of Jesus and sees it also filled with the Spirit. "If Jesus, in his first preaching applies to his person the prophetic promise of the Spirit of Is 61:1-2 ('the Spirit of the Lord is upon *me,* because he has anointed *me*...'), the Spirit becomes the Spirit of Christ in the whole Gospel, and precisely, as was shown earlier, also in his incarnation"[792] .

> Jesus acted in an impressive way as a man of the Spirit. In him one could perceive what it means to be in all aspects a bearer of the Spirit, to work and act in the Spirit, to the point that he did not need to expressly manifest himself about the Spirit. He promised the Spirit to his incapable and reluctant disciples, and they, after the resurrection and disappearance of Jesus, had the manifold experience that the hitherto impossible following had become possible and real from that moment on .[793]

This presence of the Spirit-in Jesus and in the Church-is what Luke

captured in his double work. The experience of the fullness of the Spirit manifested in the Church is the fruit of the previous activity of the Spirit in the whole life of Jesus, from his conception by the work of the Spirit to the resurrection that gives the Spirit. Therefore, just as the Spirit accompanied Jesus, so too - in the continuation of his work - "it is the Holy Spirit who is the foundation of the courageous apostolic proclamation", as can be clearly seen throughout the Acts of the Apostles.

What does "explainer" mean?

Balthasar's fundamental thesis reads as follows: in the words of John's Gospel about "the Spirit of truth" who guides "to the fullness of truth", "we find a summary of what the Holy Spirit does and how he indirectly makes his essence known"[794] . The Gospel states:

> When he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all truth. For he will not speak on his own authority, but what he hears he will speak, and he will tell you what is to come. He will glorify me, for he will receive what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. Therefore I told you that he will receive and take of mine and declare it to you (Jn 16:13-14).

In this text John synthesizes the work of the Spirit from his identity as "explainer" *(der Ausleger*), and with this, John understands the action of the Holy Spirit as leading to unity with the incarnate and resurrected Logos, since he is the only revealer of the Father. And indeed, this concept can be understood as a good synthesis, which incorporates what was already hinted at in the Old Testament about the Spirit and the Word, which were the unified form of how God made himself known to the world. And it also incorporates what is revealed in the New Testament, where Jesus appears full of the Spirit, but also promises and sends it from the Father. Hence the appropriateness of this "ultimate simplification of John"[795] , which summarizes his pneumatology in the notion of the "Spirit of truth" that he *introduces* in "the full truth". Now, for Balthasar, this means that the Spirit possesses three characteristics, which are expressed (1) in the concept of "interpreter", (2) in the idea of "complete truth" (= full truth) and (3) in the denomination of "Paraclete".

1. *The interpreter.* The Holy Spirit is above all an "interpreter" for two

reasons. First, because he announces, recalls and teaches the truth, which means - in John's Gospel - that he leads or guides us to the whole truth, that is, he leads us to the whole truth. Now, we must keep in mind that, for John, truth means revelation, explanation, interpretation of God - who is the truth - that is, it means that one can know, understand and accept the God who *reveals himself* (= shows his truth) through his Son. The task of the Holy Spirit is then to make us understand in fullness the manifestation of God, through the Son. The second reason is actually the answer to a question: why do we need the work of the Holy Spirit, if the Son is already the revelation of the Father? For two reasons. Because "the preaching of Jesus demands a firm faith in his divine origin, and in part also arouses it", in such a way that that first "initial and inchoative understanding of faith in Jesus" is already the work of the Holy Spirit; which is also indicating to us that Jesus "is from always, by his own fullness of Spirit, the source of the Spirit"[796] . But also, because "only when Jesus disappears can the Spirit come", since "the incarnate Word of God can only be explained in its totality ('the complete truth') when it is said to the end: in his death and resurrection"[797] . That is why "the mission of the incarnation can only be embraced and explained in its unity and depth from its consummation. For it is only at that moment that 'the complete truth' in the Johannine sense is realized, and therefore ready for interpretation"[798] .

"The whole truth" (ἡ ἀλήθεια πᾶσα = the whole truth). This concept must be well understood. It has no quantitative meaning, still less could it mean that Jesus lacked words or content to deliver.

"The complete truth" means, therefore, not the synthesis of a certain number of individual truths, but the one truth of God's explanation through the Son in the inexhaustible fullness of his concrete universality. This is already present when the Son explains the truth of divine love with his entire incarnate existence. [In a similar sense, the Spirit will not only continue to expound this explanation, but will also bear "witness" to it (15:26), that is, he will respond to it with his whole being. And such a testimony, understood theologically, is not pronounced only *before* someone, nor only *in favor of* someone, but as a manifest offering of one's own *to* someone and, if accepted, *within* someone. "Truth" is at the same time "grace" (1:14). The opening of the sphere of love between Father and Son takes place in the Son through his self-giving to the world; accordingly, the Spirit's introduction into this open sphere of love, which is truth, is at the same time the Spirit's self-giving to the one who

accepts his witness .[799]

Here Balthasar shows very clearly that "complete truth" does not mean information, but *participation.* The Holy Spirit, as the fruit and witness of the mutual love between the Father and the Son, that is, as their mutual love, has the *dynamis* or power necessary to introduce us intimately into the participation of that same mutual love-which is in fact the same Spirit-since he "probes everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:10) and communicates himself to us. In this way, with his presence and inner action in us, we learn to know who is the Father who loves us and who is the Son who receives everything from the Father and gives himself for us. "Thereby we are not only introduced into an 'economic' Trinity turned outward, but into an immanent truth; for, if the introduction did not entirely concern 'the whole truth,' something of the mystery of God would remain in the background uncommunicated"[800] . This is why John identifies truth and grace (Jn 1:14), because one can know who God is only if God himself gives himself interiorly in order to be known. And this interiorization is the work of the Spirit. Therefore, he leads us to the "complete truth.

From this we can draw some important conclusions in order to understand what it means to authentically "know" God. Indeed, if introduction into the divine realm consists in participation in the loving relationship of the Father with the Son, then this implies at the same time - as we have already seen - a process of divinization and incorporation into the body of Christ, that is, of becoming one with Christ (Gal. 3:28). Consequently, the "complete truth" - or what amounts to the same thing, his introduction into it - will mean acquiring the characteristics of the Son and of the Spirit. Concretely: since the divine is holy, it will mean sanctification; since the Son is in constant prayer/communication with the Father, it will mean learning to pray and to say Abba; and identifying as sons with the Son will mean beginning to live like Christ in love, in faith and with the new law written in the heart. Finally, Balthasar concludes that, if John has been called "the theologian", it is precisely because he has understood, like no other, the necessary mutual requirement of inspiration of the

Spirit and personal meditation[801] . Both are necessary -one for the other- to access the complete truth.

3. *The Paraclete.* This designation of Paraclete, which means "defender, helper, intercessor, witness, advocate," does not indicate something different from what we have said about the Spirit as "explainer of the revelation of God in Christ," but it is another way of expressing the same thing, which at the same time specifies it[802] . Strictly speaking, Jesus himself is our intercessor or Paraclete before the Father (1 Jn 2:1), but after his death and resurrection he sends us another Paraclete (Jn 14:16), who can adequately take his place (Jn 14:18), since he is as divine as the Son and can replace the temporary presence of the Son with a new form of presence "in the Spirit" (Rm 8:9). It is the Paraclete-Spirit that enables the disciples to be with Jesus, to remember his words and to follow him faithfully. Thus there is a close relationship between Jesus and the Spirit, even though they remain different. Now, from what has been said, we can see that "the roles of the Spirit as 'witness' (Jn 15:26) and as 'convicter' (Jn 16:8-11) are connected", since he testifies in favor of the Son and convinces of the error of rejecting Jesus, tasks proper to a paraclete, advocate or defender[803] . The connection between paraclete and explainer is then easy:

> This "forensic" activity with respect to the world appears in close connection with the "guidance to the complete truth": for believers, this activity means a positive indication of the way to the inner fullness of the truth of the revelation between Father and Son [...] The Spirit does not act as an earthly advocate; rather, he carries out his process on the plane of divine revelation in Christ, and here, for the duration of history, it is he who guides to the complete truth, while refuting all non-truth . [804]

In synthesis, to be an "explainer" means that the Spirit *introduces* (= guides) us into the very (Trinitarian) life of God, starting from faith and the recognition of the Son as the revealer of the Father. To this end, he defends us from evil and *convinces* (= interprets and enlightens) us about the grace that Christ has brought us, identifying us with his own feelings (of the Son) as he pours himself as love (of the Father and of the Son) into our hearts.

Distinguishing characteristics of the Holy Spirit

Although in the salvific economy it has been possible to distinguish with some clarity between the work of the Son and that of the Spirit, this has not meant, however, that it has been easy for theology to describe, as such, the distinctive characteristics of the Holy Spirit. In fact, unlike the characteristics of the Son - which are born of the notion of son, of what generation means and of what it is to be an archetype - there is a particular difficulty in determining the characteristics proper to the Spirit; since economically he does not have a "face" that characterizes him, and intratrinitally he does not possess his own concept to qualify his "procession" (as does the Son, whose procession is defined as "generation"). Since Constantinople (381), both the divinity and the sanctity of the Spirit were out of the question. Moreover, reflection agreed that the Spirit was the mutual love between the Father and the Son (from Paul's text in Rom 5:5), that is, it was the hypostatized love of God. But there has been a permanent difficulty in "knowing its properties", since "these must be rooted in the intratrinitally colorless concept of 'procession' (*ekporeusis*), which only receives color through the economic 'attributes of identification' (*notiones*) that are appropriate to the Spirit in Scripture". So, in the face of this difficulty, one must review from Scripture - that is, from the economy - what the *procession* of the Holy Spirit can mean - it proceeds from the Father (principally) and the Son - that is, the "distinctives in which the living God manifests himself especially in his way of being as the Holy Spirit"[805] . Balthasar describes three: gift, freedom and witness, since economically they have a special relationship with the action of the Holy Spirit, although equally these three characteristics must always be understood in relation to the action of the Father and the Son, since the Trinity always works *ad extra* as a whole . [806]

Don

Immanently. If we think of what happens in the intratrinitarian processions, we immediately perceive that they can be characterized as a gift[807] . And "in an authentic gift, the donor wants to give himself as in a transparent symbol". With that, we can think of the processions in the following way. "The eternal Father gives to the Son his entire

divine being in its entirety", without losing in this way - ineffably - "his divine being" (DH 805). In this perfect gift there occurs what happens in all love - in this Balthasar follows Ferdinand Ulrich[808] -, that is, there occurs the separation between "donor and gift"[809] . Indeed, the Father who gives his whole divine being, in a mysterious way must also be able to separate himself from what he gives so that this gift (his divine being) can be authentically in the one who receives it as a gift received - this is the Son who then possesses the whole divinity - and also be distinct from the Father. Both share the same complete divinity (which is simple and therefore cannot be "divided") and, at the same time, each possesses it completely, but in his own way. But "the Son not only receives 'something' from the Father" (e.g., his essence), "but at the same time 'something' from the Father". his essence), "but the Father himself who gives himself" and, therefore, since the Father is only donation, the Son "receives in the gift the giving; consequently, in his equally complete reception, he is not only thanksgiving", "but return, offering of himself for all that the Father disposes by giving, absolute availability" "with a divine sovereignty and freedom of the same category as the Father"[810] , because what is received - and which constitutes him as Son - is precisely an act of donation or better said, a donation in act.

In this beautiful reflection,[811] , the character of the gift of the Holy Spirit is evident. Balthasar makes palpable the reciprocal self-giving of love of the Father and the Son - which, as we know, is precisely the Holy Spirit, which is exactly the fruit of the love of the Father and the Son - in which both renounce being a pure "I" without a "you", since "they always find themselves in the other who gives himself"[812] . And, therefore, this renunciation, this self-emptying, has nothing negative or annihilating about it, but, on the contrary, it is pure positivity of good: it is mutual love, that is, the Holy Spirit that coincides with mutual self-giving. Now, since the Father and the Son meet and share their love for each other - which is the fruit of mutual renunciation for love - and this is precisely what unites them intimately, then that love - which is equal and common to both - is experienced absolutely as a gift and a permanent gift from one to the other. Thus, this mutual love

can only be defined as a *gift*. The Holy Spirit has a manifest character of gift, since he is mutually given by the Father and the Son and, at the same time, is the fruit of that same gift. For this reason he can be given to the world precisely as "the" highest gift of God.

2. *Economically*. The gift of the Holy Spirit to the human being is what is called *grace*. The Spirit, which was already present in the Old Testament, and which was promised as an interior and eschatological gift in order to fulfill the law from the heart (Jer 31:33), is the promised gift of God. But only when God fulfilled the covenant, "himself bilaterally", that is, when the Word unified "in his person both 'natures'", then the promise could be fulfilled from what we have called "divinization"[813] . The Holy Spirit, who filled Jesus, could then be given interiorly to the human being because - according to Irenaeus - in Jesus he had acquired the experience of being man and can now transform every human being according to the model of Christ (*Ad. haer*. III,17,1)[814] . This is what we have said about the exchange and the fruits of the *pro nobis* of the passion. The Holy Spirit as gift and grace.

3. *Spirit-human being relationship*. The great thing about what has just been said is that - beyond all the possibilities and capacities of the human being - this relationship in freedom and with such depth between God (Holy Spirit) and the creature can only come about because this relationship is admirably founded on intratrinitarian relations. We have already said that "only if intradivinally the Father transmits to the Son, together with all his divinity, the sovereign freedom of the latter, is it understandable that he can also endow man with his own being and freedom"[815] . Thus, since infinite freedom allows finite freedom to exist, when the Archetype of man became man, this relationship could also be brought to its fullness. And this was possible because grace-which is the Holy Spirit as divine gift-"no longer intradivinally destroys the 'dialogical' opposition of Father and Son, but consummates it in an exuberant way," because the Holy Spirit is precisely the nexus of love between the Father and the Son. So the presence of the Spirit in the human being can in no way destroy this finite freedom. What happens is exactly the opposite: the Holy Spirit

initiates a process of healing and sanctification that accompanies and assists the whole journey of the human being so that he can develop to the maximum his dialogue of love with the Father, in the Son. Balthasar spoke at length on this theme in *Theodramatica* II, and we mentioned it in the chapter on finite freedom[816] . Therefore, here it only remains to present one last theological clarification that interests Balthasar. In the gift of the Holy Spirit to the human heart - as we saw in the Father within the Trinity - "in the identity of the Spirit given to the soul there must be a separation of donor and gift. Otherwise, the gift would remain in the giver as an imparted reality"[817] . That is to say, the Holy Spirit must be in the human being as such, without ceasing to be everywhere else. For this reason, the distinction that we hear between "created grace" and "uncreated grace" is inadequate. The Spirit, in the interior of the human heart, is never "created" (i.e. "created grace"), in spite of being "distinguished" from the Spirit as an intradivine Person. And this for a very simple reason: because "it must not be forgotten that God can indeed place before himself the creature as the Other, but in this way he himself never becomes the Other; he remains *Non* Aliud"[818] . It remains a mystery how the Holy Spirit can be immanent to the human spirit, without ceasing to be the Spirit of God and distinct from the human being, who always remains himself. It is the mystery of the *donum doni* [= *gift* of the gift].

Freedom

Immanently. Augustine, based on Scripture, emphasizes in the Holy Spirit the quality of freedom and liberator. Indeed, we read that the Spirit, like the wind, "blows where he wills" (Jn 3:8) and that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17). From there, Balthasar repeats the intratrinitarian reflection that he has just made with respect to the "gift" characteristic of the divine processions, but now he does it under the aspect of the "freedom" of those same processions, since "an intratrinitarian origin must be sought for this freedom of the Spirit"[819] . And here, once again, he closely follows Adrienne von Speyr[820] . He affirms that "the generation of the Son by the Father is not arbitrary, subject to his pleasure", but is part of "the divine necessity, which expresses his spiritual essence"[821] , which

means that he does it with his most absolute divine freedom which, at the same time, is an essential necessity (to give himself), all this above any human parallel or understanding[822] . For his part, "the Son allows himself to be begotten by the Father from eternity and freely places himself at the disposal of the Father's designs; consequently, he gifts the Father with a freedom in the form of availability and obedience to fulfill his desires, which count on his collaboration"[823] . As we already know, this mutual and completely free encounter of "surrender" is, properly speaking, the procession of the Holy Spirit, which, in this sense, is the coincidence of two completely free surrenders. The result of the mutual surrender is the surprising procession of the Spirit - in the sense that it is much more than what was sought and thought, which was the simple and gratuitous surrender - as the fruit of free love and testimony of the gratuitousness of the mutual surrender. Thus, for Balthasar (founded on Adrienne von Speyr), the Holy Spirit

> is the quintessence resulting from divine love which, as its ultimate fruit, represents the product of a will of necessity of the Father and of a will of the Son formed by divine necessity and at the same time freedom. Thus, in him we can no longer speak of necessity, but of a freedom of love that is certainly due to the Father and to the Son, and in this sense is at the disposal of his plan, which counts on it. But this is only insofar as it is free and liberated love, to which is entrusted in a new and original synthesis, so to speak, the choice of the ways in which God's designs are to be realized, within the breadth of the divine inventive power . [824]

Thus it is clear that the Holy Spirit is by essence the "freedom" of God, in the sense that he is the fruit of the absolute "necessary" freedom of the Father and the Son to love and give themselves to each other. And as the fruit of free love, it is then the clearest expression of God's freedom for the mutual intra-Trinitarian self-giving of persons and, at the same time, in that same intra-Trinitarian self-giving, it is the absolute freedom to project, devise and carry out - with absolute freedom and inventiveness - salvific projects for the good of the human being. Hence, there is no human action that can stop God's love and his self-giving for love (in the Spirit). That is why God's inventiveness to save humanity has been eternally infinite, to the point of dying on the cross, descending into hell and assuming human sin *pro nobis*, as an act led by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, as the quintessence of this free love - or of this loving freedom - can

therefore justly be characterized as *the freedom* of God, without subtracting this same characteristic from the Father and the Son, because it is precisely the fruit of their love.

2. *Economically.* The Holy Spirit -given as grace- gives us the knowledge and strength so that we can respond affirmatively to God's call; but he does so without forcing our freedom in any way. That is to say, what he does is precisely to free our freedom from all chains so that we can respond freely and affirmatively to God, welcoming his inspiration and guidance, which never force our freedom. As we have already had the opportunity to show, "the Spirit with his grace frees man for his true human freedom, which he only really achieves in conformity with the freedom of the divine love that dwells in him"[825] . Divine freedom is not opposed to created freedom, precisely because - we say it once again - God is transcendent and Not-Other and, therefore, can be *immanent* to human freedom and liberate it, without taking away its freedom.

Testimonial

Immanently. "The witness of the Spirit, which he [Jesus] will send into the world upon his return to the Father, is decisive for the consummation of his work of salvation" (promised in Jn 15:26f.; 16:7-15)[826] . This also has an intratrinitarian foundation in the fact that the Holy Spirit, as the fruit of the mutual love between the Father and the Son, *bears witness* to their mutual love[827] . Indeed, the hypostasis of the Spirit, insofar as it is the mutual love between the Father and the Son, "is the absolute knowledge of love from within" and really knows what that love is; but at the same time, as mutual love, it is the product or fruit of that same love, and simultaneously it is "the objective witness that this love takes place eternally." Therefore, since the Spirit perfectly knows this love and bears witness that this love exists, he is the perfect witness and testimony of love - which coincides with what God is - and for this very reason the Holy Spirit is *essentially* "the witness"[828] .

2. *Economically.* In Scripture we perceive that the Holy Spirit is the one who manifests to Jesus the will of the Father, and in this sense,

leads him throughout his ministry until the culmination of his work on the cross, as the ultimate expression of the Son's fidelity to the mission entrusted to him by the Father. In this way, the Holy Spirit bears witness - especially at that culminating moment - to the fullness of love and unity between the Father and the Son, expressed precisely in the Son's abandonment, that is, in his total self-giving of love. On the cross, Jesus gives the (= his) Spirit (Jn 19:30), who testifies precisely to what is happening at that moment. And since witness is always incarnational, the witnessing work of the Spirit is expressed first in making the Word bodily present and then in making the Church - the risen Body of Christ - present as an institution. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is *in* and *upon* the ordering of the Church-analogously as he was *in* and *upon* Jesus-because he bears witness in her, but also leads her in her mission. Thus, in the ecclesial witness of the Spirit there will always be a tension between the institution and the Spirit.

In synthesis, we can say that these three economic characteristics of the Holy Spirit - gift, freedom and witness - which are perceived from his own salvific action, are an expression of and simultaneously have their foundation in the intratrinitarian procession of the Spirit, which is realized precisely as a free gift that testifies to the mutual love between the Father and the Son. For this reason, the Holy Spirit, like this fruit, can be defined by these same three characteristics, even though they are also found in the other Trinitarian persons. This is precisely what is most proper to the Spirit: to be that common characteristic of God - love - as hypostasis, that is, as objective fruit.

Action of the Holy Spirit in the Church

Balthasar's ecclesiology will be specifically reviewed in the next chapter, so that here we will only outline some characteristics of the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church, in order to better understand the economic action of the Spirit, in continuity with the theme of this chapter. Balthasar, in *Theology* III, devotes more than 150 pages to the theme *The Holy Spirit and the Church,* but there he warns "that many affirmations refer to what has already been reflected" and that he will deal with an immense number of subjects and that it will be very

difficult to systematize due to the diversity of themes[829] . For this reason, it has seemed opportune to us here to present synthetically the fundamental lines of what was said there, highlighting only what they express about the Spirit himself, and leaving all the other more purely ecclesiological themes for the next chapter. On the other hand, these pages are a general summary of Balthasar's writings, which do not present any special novelties.

The Holy Spirit forms the ecclesial body

1. *Universal action of the Spirit.* Before referring to the Church, we must remember that "nowhere" in "Scripture" is it said that "God's plan consists in redeeming the Church"; it is always about the redemption of the world, for whom the Son has given his life. And in correspondence to "this universality of the Son's work" there is also the universality of the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost and his work in the world[830] . Now, for Paul, the "cosmic lordship of Christ is facilitated through the unity of the Church", which is the body of Christ, and which has been constituted as such "by virtue of the Holy Spirit". In this way the Spirit has a mission "as universal as that of the cosmic Christ"[831] . Therefore, the distinction between the visible Church and the world is "always overcome in Christ and his Holy Spirit," since everything is unified in the risen Body of Christ. But at the same time, precisely for this very reason, "this means that the Church in her innermost essence (also with her sacraments and organic ordinances) is missionally ordered to the world"[832] . This is her sole purpose: the mission to which the Holy Spirit leads her, even though the same Spirit is always "present and active in the whole world"[833] .

The Holy Spirit, then, is indissolubly united to "the work of reconciliation and liberation that the Father carries out in the Son"[834] , and is always present and effective "in the being and action of the Son"[835] ,

> has an essential part in the *actu primo* [= first act] of reconciliation between God and the world (2 Cor 5:19), between heaven and earth (Col 1:20), brought about by the crucified body of Jesus. This act of God, which precedes every human decision, must be considered as the prelude and presupposition of every justification carried out by the individual, a principle that is above all universal and (in a stricter sense) ecclesiological-social, and from which every personal justification is already situated in a context that is always co-human.

> No personal justification is private [...]. God's offer of love to the sinner, that he join the world in its reconciled condition, constitutes a real modification of the sinner's relationship with God. The dissemination of this invitation to accept the offered gift of the Spirit of freedom, of the *gratia liberatrix* [= liberating grace], would once again be the Church's proclamation: "...God exhorts through us. In the name of Christ we beseech you: be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20) . [836]

Here we see the profound relationship of the Church with the Spirit. The initiative of salvation and sanctification of the human being is always God's, because he alone is the saint, and only the Holy Spirit can make a creature holy. Hence the whole work of the Church is always to follow, accompany and serve the ever prior work of the Spirit, who has justified and sanctified the hearts of people and who continues to bring about their development so that they may bear the fruits of eternal life. In this sense, the Church is at the service of the Spirit's ever prior action. The Spirit precedes and accompanies the mission, leads it and makes it bear fruit. She then receives the fruits of this reconciling action of the Spirit: her new members, who are now incorporated consciously and by faith into the Body of Christ, because the act of reconciliation was previously accomplished in the pneumatic body of Christ. Therefore, all justification is in itself already an incorporation into the Church, as communion in Christ.

2. *Common action of the Son and the Spirit to form the Church.* The Son and the Spirit are united in the work of redemption, since the Spirit led the Son to the cross, and after that "the transmission of the Spirit took place, through the Son from the Father, to a Church whose language is understood by all peoples and which is sent to all nations to the ends of the earth". This Church has been sent into the world by the Son and with the mission of the Son, but also "through the gift of a Spirit who does not speak of his own, but constantly refers back to the Son (and thus to the Father), to the point that in hearts he shouts the basic word of the Son: 'Abba, Father'"[837] . There we see clearly the communion of the Son and the Spirit in the redemptive action, which allows neither a clear separation nor an identification between the two, because the incarnate - and now glorified - Son is inseparable from the Holy Spirit. For this reason, in the formation of the ecclesial body, both act together, although they are always distinguishable

from one another in their being and in their action. Indeed, the Church is born of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, where he offers himself to the Father, giving us his own Spirit, who makes us one body with him - we are "one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28) - in whom we can also say to God, Father (Galatians 4:6). Now this body, which is the Church, is so because it has received the Spirit of the Risen One with all the power of his love, which makes the Church a communion - the body of Christ - and orders all its structures for communion among the risen ones .[838]

The common work of the Son and the Spirit in the formation of the Church has certain consequences. In the first place, with the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Son himself gives himself - as Son - which means that in the Spirit, as gift, the one who gives himself, that is, the Son, is also present. In fact, the Spirit always "embodies" the Son, that is his economic mission and that is his task in the Church. Therefore, the mission of the Spirit will always be to explain the Son, that is, to introduce us into the relationship of the Son with the Father, making us part of the body of Christ, and in that sense making us Church. The second consequence is that the separation "between his perceptible form and his pneumatic mode of being remains the prerequisite for access to his sending of the Spirit and his own spiritual return. The hiatus is indispensable so that the universality latent in the particularity of Jesus' earthly existence can be revealed"[839] . That is to say, as long as this world exists, the presence of the Son will always have to be spiritual and interior and mediated by the action of the Spirit - which is also interior - since the risen Jesus has necessarily been taken away from us, precisely so that he can be universalized through the Spirit. The presence of Christ in the Church is thus given in the form of her being the risen body of Christ. But this necessarily implies that the Church understands herself as an instrument or sacrament of the only one who is important: Christ. "The ultimate gift of God, the Holy Spirit, is to be expected only through a radical renunciation: not of a thing, but of the self, and in this case of the possession of the tangible, visible, experiential Jesus"[840] . And this has direct repercussions on how the Church understands herself and all

her institutions. The third consequence is the need to recognize that the Church has been founded both by the pre-Easter Jesus and by the Holy Spirit sent after his resurrection, which determines the internal constitution of its pilgrim structure on earth:

> Indeed, for us who remain in the flesh, everything spiritual-charismatic must be embedded in visible structures; but these structures are filled with the goods of the risen Christ who has become spiritual. To affirm this presupposes something more than simply declaring that the Church is both visible and invisible; it would have to be said, more concretely, that, while on pilgrimage on earth, she is both pre- and post-pastoral . [841]

The Holy Spirit is incorporated into the ecclesial structures in order to act through them, but, at the same time, he is more than them and is present with the freedom proper to the Spirit. The Spirit is thus the profound mystery of the Church of Christ.

The Spirit acts subjectively and objectively in the Church

Unity between the subjective and the objective. Starting from the classic principle - already stated - that the economic action of the Spirit is based on the place and action of the Spirit within the immanent Trinity, we can affirm that the objective-institutional aspect and the subjective-existential aspect in the Church - both as fruit of the work of the Spirit in it - are based "on the double aspect of the eternal Holy Spirit in God, who is both the most intimate focus of the movement of love of Father and Son and, as a product and fruit of it, its objective witness"[842] . Indeed, as J. A. Dorner[843] states, "the Holy Spirit performs in the economic Trinity precisely the same ministry that he performs in the immanent, where he is the principle that maintains distinctions and also that which unifies them"[844] . "Now, intratrinitally both aspects of the Holy Spirit: union and distinction, love and witness are absolutely identical"[845] . On the other hand, in the economic field both aspects are distinguished, since the Son has kenotically assumed humanity and the Trinitarian inversion has taken place, the Holy Spirit, as mutual love between the Father and the Son, has positioned himself between the Father and the incarnate Son, making present the love of the Father as a command to be fulfilled, and the Son responds with his obedience and availability. Command and obedience are thus the twofold concrete form in which love, which in the Trinity is

unique and mutual, is now expressed economically. In this way, this unique mutual love, given that the Son has assumed creatureliness and there cannot be an identity between God and creature, then assumes the form of command-obedience, but which testifies to mutual love because there is perfect obedience to the command. Thus, obedience and availability to the Father is the most perfect form of living and demonstrating love .[846]

Therefore, as a result of the double subjective-objective action of the Spirit, there must also exist in the Church a distinction between the subjective and objective structure of the faith and of the Christian life. But this distinction is called to be permanently overcome to the extent that the believer, a member of the Church, understands ever more deeply that what is commanded by the Father - in the Son - is the economic form of his eternal love and, therefore, is disposed to obey it as his own personal and "economic" form of expressing his love and faith. And from this it follows that a strict separation is not possible between the action of the Holy Spirit in the objective and his action in the subjective, both in the structuring of the Church and in the sanctification of the faithful. In the objective, the divine *subject* is present, and human subjectivity is expressed in ecclesial *objectivity*. Both the objective and the subjective always point, as a final goal, to the introduction into a greater and deeper *communio sanctorum,* which is, ultimately, incorporation into the Trinity, where this objective-subjective separation disappears. Balthasar ends this reflection with an ecclesiological conclusion of the greatest importance and expressed with diaphanous clarity:

> A pure *opus operatum* [= action done] without *opus operantis* [= implication of the one who does it] remains a borderline concept (which, because of sin, proves to be necessary); but, at the same time, from the point of view of God's redemptive plan, it shows itself to be something that should not be, an absurdity. It exists - in an anti-donatist way - for the benefit of those who receive graces in this way; for the unprepared sinner, who administers or receives it, it remains useless .[847]

This distances us from any magical conception of the ecclesial and sacramental structure, and puts the accent back on the sacraments as acts of faith; but, above all, puts the center back on communion with the Spirit, which is what truly sanctifies. At the same time, it avoids

the illusion of a subjectivity without an "object," which is impossible in a corporal life, whether personal or communitarian. Finally, the Church, moved by the Holy Spirit, is traversed by this double aspect, where her "objective holiness" is "unattainable subjectively," but precisely for this reason, "subjective holiness" will be attained only "if she 'strives and strives' within the objective, is channeled and normalized by it and thus serves as its path and goal"[848] .

Balthasar proposes five structures in which the *Spirit acts objectively,* because each "individual only obtains the true access to Christ that God wants in the global communion of the Church. And it is through these structures, which are fruits of the Holy Spirit's permanent action, that the Church makes Christ present. We mention them here simply by way of illustration: (1) The triduum *Tradition-Scripture-Ministry,* behind which the Spirit acts with his inspiration and animation and which "far surpasses the relationship of the individual to Christ"[849] . Christ entrusted to the Holy Spirit the transmission and explanation of his own presence, and that same Spirit will be the one who will permanently animate this transmission and, at the same time, will constantly surpass it because the self-giving of the Father in the Son can never be exhaustively "grasped". (2) *Proclamation and liturgy*, which are made not as a personal initiative, but clothed "with power from on high" (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8) and which constitute the disciples as heralds, through whom God himself exhorts the people. Thus preaching becomes an event that goes far beyond preaching itself. (3) In the *sacraments* "the Spirit acts in the sacramental event rather as the realizer of the Trinitarian-ecclesial event, and does so globally. In this way, the individual subject who, in order to ask for a sacrament and prepare for it, must already possess something of the subjective Spirit [...], is introduced by the power of God into the ecclesial sphere with his objective holiness, which leaves behind everything subjective"[850] , and makes him participate in this objective holiness in all the decisive moments of his existence. (4) Since the freedom of the Holy Spirit is not synonymous with arbitrariness, but establishes the right of God, which means a certain order and justice among men; then *canon law* is but the materialization of that action of the Spirit, which is certainly

not opposed to love. On the contrary, it is sustained precisely by love, and it must be radicalized by it (and this is also an obligation)[851] . (5) Finally, *theology*, as an explanation of faith, is indispensable for growing in love of God. But it needs the Spirit who, like a light, in this explanation, illuminates the content of what is believed in its unity and authentic depth .[852]

3. Since the objective and the *subjective* are inseparable, "the subjective aspects of the Spirit in his function of edification and animation of the Church and of the ecclesial man can never be separated from the objective presuppositions of this activity". But it is important to be clear that "this movement is not symmetrical, for all objective holiness exists in view of the subjective movement of the members of the Church towards the holiness of Christ in the Holy Spirit"[853] . Here again Balthasar proposes some examples of the subjective action of the Spirit: (1) *Prayer* can only take place in the Spirit, since "the Son never encounters the Father (nor the Father the Son) otherwise than in the Holy Spirit"[854] . It is the Spirit who places in the hearts of believers the "Abba" of sons (Gal 4:6). Indeed, "there can be no Christian prayer that is not a response in the Spirit of Christ to the Word that the Father has addressed to us through Christ in the Spirit"[855] . (2) Christian *forgiveness* is also the fruit of the Holy Spirit who, poured into our hearts, unites us - with our forgiveness and asking for forgiveness - to the covenant of Christ on the cross, who forgives our sins with his oblation. (3) The Holy Spirit is also (obviously) in the background of all *discernment of spirits* which helps us to distinguish the true "spirit" of God in the midst of one's own existence. (4) Finally, the *witness of life*, which involves the whole existence of the believer, simply means to be able to witness in the Spirit (= to make others participate) to the love of God for humanity, starting from ecclesial love. Witness can have many aspects, but all of them involve the following of Christ and life-giving love. That is the *martyr.*

A critical view

After reading this extensive section on *The Spirit and the Church*, one is left with a double critical impression. On the one hand, one senses a

certain haste to finish this already long *Trilogy*, which is manifested in a certain accumulation of themes -all interesting and important- but developed in a somewhat cursory manner. And, on the other hand, as he himself acknowledges[856] , he takes up again some previous themes - particularly (although not only) the ecclesiology of *Theodramatica* III- where, although he shows the work of the Holy Spirit, the development is thought rather from an ecclesiological perspective (more than pneumatological), fading somewhat the central theme of the section. This sense of haste, *mutatis mutandis*, could still extend in some sense to the entire volume. Moreover, since the *Trilogy* does not obey a Trinitarian tripartition, its third part - the *Theological* - need not be devoted only to the Holy Spirit and, in fact, only the third volume does so (and from the perspective of Theo-logic). Hence, especially in this last section on the work of the Spirit in the Church, its subject matter being appropriately placed in this place - insofar as the Church is one of the forms and instruments that the Holy Spirit has to carry out the explanation of revelation - yet, throughout the section, it is finally not entirely clear what the ultimate goal of the text is: ecclesiology? pneumatology? hermeneutical logic of the Spirit? In any case, none of this in any way diminishes the undeniable value of the whole work, but only shows that the passage of time is relentless.

Action of the Holy Spirit in the world

In a brief section, he returns to a theme that he had already mentioned - as the general context of the Spirit's action in the Church - namely, that beyond the Church, the Spirit acts in the whole world. His efficacy is universal. But the reflection here focuses rather on showing that the action of the Holy Spirit in the world - as the third person of the Trinity - cannot be confused with a principle driving the development of the world towards its greater fullness; which, in any case, would be an entelechy or an intramundane and created reality, and not the Spirit of God. However, it does not go much deeper into how the Spirit acts in the world.

First, he recalls the theological reason that proves the universal

action and efficacy of the Spirit in the world: "if the creation of the world took place in reference to the Son", and the Son became incarnate through the work of the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit, because of his relationship with the Son, must "have been a collaborator as a person in creation". And if the work of redemption is universal - which is Trinitarian - then the activity of the Spirit must also be universal[857] . This is what Irenaeus expressed in his famous phrase, where he maintained that the Father acted in the world always and simultaneously "with his two hands" (*Adv. haer.* IV,20,1)[858] . Now, this universal action of the Spirit can be seen in three areas: (1) In the universal presence of *spermata pneumatika* [= spiritual seeds], which means that the Spirit acts in every human heart, accomplishing there what is proper to the Spirit: renewing the heart so that the human being can be united to Christ and recognize the Father. (2) He sends and leads the Church in her (equally) universal mission, with all that we have already mentioned about his action in her. (3) He impels the Church and the whole world, "which was radically redeemed by Christ, towards its consummation"[859] . Finally, Balthasar, from a Trinitarian point of view, shows what is most characteristic of the relationship of the Spirit with the world in creation and redemption. Based on K. Barth[860] , he affirms that, if the Holy Spirit economically brought about the incarnation of the Son so that he might have a properly human life and, on the other hand, every creature has been created in the Son, then the Holy Spirit is "the divine person who makes possible the existence of the creature as such," that is, the one "who enables it to exist, who maintains it in its existence." This is because it is the love and gift of God, which is the only "possibility of being a creature outside of God": a gift of love .[861]

Balthasar then distinguishes this action of the *divine* Holy Spirit from what has been called the "soul of the world" - or in other ways - and which always indicates an *intramundane* principle that moves, develops and brings the world to its fullness.

The Greeks -Pythagoras, Plato in the *Timaeus* (34AB), the Stoics (Cicero, Marcus Aurelius), Plotinus-, and later also the Arabs from Alkindi to Averroes, had postulated a world soul. Augustine doubted whether he should accept it, but explained clearly that, if there was one, it would not be divine, but created. Only the attempts of the school of Chartres in the 12th

century, Thierry of Chartres, Bernard Silvestris and William of Conches - in their attempt to bring theology and cosmology closer together - identified the soul of the world with the Holy Spirit or with an effluvium of it. The one who paid the consequences was Abelard, whose affirmation "*quod Spiritus Sanctus sit anima mundi*" [= that the Holy Spirit is the soul of the world] was condemned at the Council of Sens (DH 722) . [862]

In modern times, Pannemberg, "in his attempt to offer a pneumatological complement to Theilhard de Chardin's theology of evolution", has tried similar explanations using the concepts of "force field" and "frame of reference"[863] . This would be like the factor or active presence of the Spirit in the evolution of the world, that is, the one that raises the living being over the barriers it faces and makes it transcend itself. However, for Balthasar, such a doctrine presents important problems. It levels the Old Testament *pneuma* of cosmological type with the New Testament Holy Spirit of soteriological characteristics. But the problem is that it levels them "in favor of the Old Testament," that is, "in the direction of a certain identity between the transcendent human spirit and a divine Spirit understood in some way as 'soul of the world'"[864] . Such a theory is not possible since it does not do justice to the theological performance and characteristics of the Holy Spirit as a *divine person.*

It seems to Balthasar that this form of speculation goes beyond the scope of biblical revelation, and furthermore is not properly Trinitarian. Indeed, the Old Testament must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament (and not the other way around), also - and a fortiori - in pneumatology. Consequently,

the Spirit in the New Covenant is described as the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of humility, of service, of descent to the last place (therefore, to the place of the giving of life as atonement for all). This being so, it will hardly be possible to transform it, within the evolution of the created universe, into the motor of ascent, of the self-transcendence of the forms (full of logos) and, therefore, by degree or by force, into the Spirit of power, of the victory of the strongest . [865]

Rather, it must be affirmed that this ascension of the world to higher levels of existence-which appears as planned-must be considered "as [the] universal plan of the Creator," that is, this "driving principle, however it is called," must always be considered as "pertaining to creation."[866] . To identify that driving principle, natural and immanent, with the revealed Holy Spirit, does not seem to coincide

with what the New Testament reveals to us as the peculiarity of the Holy Spirit: Spirit who lowers himself and leads Jesus to death and sacrifice *pro nobis.* All in all, these attempts make us see the importance of opening the doctrine of the Holy Spirit more and better to the natural sciences, so that in some way they can also be integrated - from their own perspective and level of understanding - within the totality of God's plan, which has not only created a world and a nature for man, but they are the means and the condition of possibility for his existence and development on his path of welcoming the reign of God and the definitive encounter with the Father.

The Spirit leads us to the Father

He ends the volume, which coincides with the end of the *Theologica* and of the entire *Trilogy* (if we disregard the *Epilogue* [later]), with a few beautiful pages on the "return to the homeland" led by the Spirit. It is not properly speaking a chapter on eschatology, which he developed at great length in *Theodramatica* V, but rather - in a volume dedicated fundamentally to the economic action of the Spirit - simply a few words on the Spirit as he leads us into the depths of the Father. As we have already hinted in a general way for the whole volume, he also develops this theme in just three brushstrokes, which outline this aspect of the soteriological work of the Spirit. Recalling that the human being always longs for a return to the origin, and that only the Spirit can plumb "the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:10), the origin of everything-the divine and the human-he is the one who makes us "see" the invisible Father, introducing us to *his* divine reality. Let us look at the three ideas.

1. God created everything so that everything might meet with him, so that the goal of creation can be well described as "the return of the Son and the Spirit not only to the Father [after his redemptive work], but with them and through them of the whole of creation" [867] . This has been inscribed as an "impulse of the created man to reach his origin, which he quite often denominates with the word 'father'". This longing can be seen, for example, in the fact that, in the religions of antiquity, the more it was reflected upon, the more it came to the conclusion "that the plurality of things not identical among themselves cannot be anything definitive, it must somehow be due to an ultimate unitary source and only in it have its resting place", and that unity became the goal of all longing [868] . And then, this raised the question as to whether that which had departed (= the cosmos) from that original source or

One, since it has departed from it, had in itself the strength or the possibility of returning to that origin. In the Old Testament, on the other hand, this impulse towards the origin consisted in the constant remembrance of the covenant that God established with Israel, since it was that which constituted them as a people, that is to say, it is their longed-for origin - in the face of so much calamity and infidelity - even though the goal is the promised land. And in the New Testament Jesus is the very archetype of the departure from the Father and the return to the Father (Jn 16:28), who has opened for us "the circle of departure-entry" [869] . But the return of the Son to the Father is paradoxical, since it also points to a way forward, which is the mission and the acceptance of the kingdom of God in the world:

> In this way, the path of following Christ to the Father runs both vertically, upwards, and horizontally, towards the world, with the proclamation of salvation to all peoples and the transformation of the world according to the Christian commandment of love (870) .

Thus, after the coming of Jesus, his way back to the Father includes the whole of humanity - with its history and with the whole of creation - in such a way that the ultimate unity in the Father is truly Trinitarian and embraces all the historical and current longings of humanity. One can define the entire history of the world - as indeed Thomas does - as a going out-returning.

2. "The [Pauline] affirmation that the Spirit plumbs the depths of God (Father), and that this Spirit is given to us as the Spirit of Christ (1 Cor 2:10-16)," in showing the Trinitarian dynamic, is the answer to the yearning of the origin mentioned above [871] . Indeed, if "the Spirit himself is God" and "plumbs the depths of God", then he must plunge "into his own depths and recognize that he, who is love, is indebted to the love" of the Father (principally) and equally to the love of the Son, who returns all his love to the Father, and recognize that he himself is "witness and fruit of this reciprocal love". Now, this contemplation of the depths of the Father's love has no end, since this love, which originates from the Father, coincides with the Father himself as giving love and, therefore, "there is no possibility of reaching the depths of this groundless love" [872] , since it is infinite and unfathomable like the Father himself. And the same must be said of the Son - as manifestation or self-declaration of the Father - since as the Word of the Father, he is as unfathomable as the Father, because he is his very love in the form of "infinite gratitude" and "oblative availability" [873] . And the same must be said of the Holy Spirit, as the unfathomable love of the Father and the Son, because precisely for this very reason he cannot limit this love. Consequently, the mystery of divine love has no foundation whatsoever, since it surpasses all understanding; but at the same time, it is the foundation of all that exists, since in the light of love everything becomes clear and comprehensible, even though love itself, as its foundation, can only be explained as free gratuitousness without reason. Love can only be explained by itself. From this Balthasar draws

the (biblically evident) conclusion: the Father is known only to the Son, and the Son lives only for the Father. So the Father can only be known in the Son. And since the Son wants to make the Father known to us by sending us the Holy Spirit, then "the searching of the divine Spirit in the abyss of paternal love can and must also be, through the Spirit of Christ given to us, our own searching" which will mean recognizing all that God has given us and proclaiming the wonders of God's love (874) .

3. So the Spirit enables us to probe the Father, but is it possible to see the Father? "What can it mean to 'see' the bottomless, groundless abyss of love that is the Father?" That the Father is bottomless and groundless means that he cannot be objectifiable. Then the Father cannot be "seen," but, at most, could be "a 'realizing' of the miracle that there is such an origin" 875 . However, for Paul, "the vision of the divine seems to presuppose being endowed with 'glory' (*doxa*) (2 Cor 3:7ff.18), but it is never the glory of the Father, but of Christ" 876 . The same idea appears in John: "The 'glory' that the disciples have seen is 'the *doxa* that he receives from the Father as the only Son' (Jn 1:14)", that is, the glory that he had with the Father before coming into the world, and to which the disciples will be assimilated so that they can see Jesus in his true reality. Consequently, according to Thomas , "we must immediately participate in the divine essence in order to be able to see it" (S. Th. I, 12 ad 3) 877 , but we will see him "as infinite and not infinitely, all of him, but not totally," because he "is knowable infinitely" (S. Th. I, 12, 7c). If to see and know God means to embrace him, then in no way can God be comprehended since he is infinite. But, although "an infinite love does not allow itself to be comprehended," nevertheless, "the more love one has, the more one can penetrate the incomprehensible" 878 . And there finally is the answer to the question raised by the fact of the return to the Father: the Spirit will introduce us to love - which is himself - so that, surrounded by the glory of the Son, we can love the Father, love which is perfect knowledge. Balthasar ends with the following Trinitarian affirmation:

> Thus, we will be left with the affirmation that through the glory of the Son we see the abyss of the glory of love of the invisible Father appear, and this in the double figure of the Holy Spirit of love; at the same time, we, as born of the Spirit, exist in the fire of love, in which Father and Son meet and therefore we are also simultaneously, together with the Spirit, the witnesses and glorifiers of this love (879) .

VIII. The Church as a "concentrated" human response to the Incarnate Word

Balthasar, throughout the *Trilogy,* is constantly offering reflections on the Church, either because he introduces ecclesiological arguments in various theological considerations, or because he shows the ecclesial aspect of some theme treated. The same can be said of the rest of his works. However, just as he wrote several articles and books specifically dedicated to the Church [880] , in the same way, in the *Trilogy,* in the second part of *Theodramatica* III, he devotes particular attention to ecclesiology when he deals with the theological characters of the drama [881] . But we also find a specifically ecclesiological treatment in *Gloria* I (when he speaks of the mediation of the Church as a form) and in *Theologica* III (when he refers to the action of the Spirit in the Church). However, in all this it is important to underline two things. Mariology is treated in exactly this same place, as an integral part of ecclesiology (we will return to this topic). And in no way does he pretend in the *Theodramatic* (and in general in the *Trilogy*) to offer a complete ecclesiology, but only to present some fundamental traits of the Church and the place she occupies within the human Theo-drama.

For all these reasons, our chapter does not deal with Balthasar's "ecclesiology" - in general and in its entirety - but only tries to expose those fundamental aspects of his conception of the Church, which also implies - for the reasons just indicated - exposing the foundation of his Mariology. It is therefore necessary to deal with three major themes: (1) The human "response" (and in particular that of Mary) as the constituent action of the Church; (2) The relationship of the Church (as a people) with the peoples, and its mission in the world; (3) The essential and constitutive form and structure of the Church. From these three themes one can form a fairly adequate idea of who the Church is, its mission and its structure, in Balthasar's thought.

The Church is constituted as a response to the mission

Based on his theology of the identification between person and mission-in Christ and (although not equally) in all human beings-Balthasar develops at length the theme of the response to that mission, which implies both the participation of the one who has been called in the constitution of his own vocation and mission, as well as the communitarian aspect contained in that same call, since it is a mission *in* the one Christ. From this understanding, he

exposes the Christological and anthropological foundation of ecclesiology. Next, we will see the different aspects and actors of the act of *response* as a constituent element of the Church.

God's call socializes the person

We have seen that every vocation is essentially a call to participate in the mission of Christ, which is unique and universal, that is, it is a vocation for a common mission. "A human spiritual subject, while becoming theologically a person thanks to a unique vocation and mission, is at the same time deprivatized, socialized and transformed into a space and a community-bearing agent". Each theological person grows - as such - and develops his mission to the extent that he is incorporated into Christ and, therefore, there he opens space - in himself - to all others who are also *in Christōi.* So the opening of one's own space to others is an essential part of the call. This is due, on the one hand, to the fact that all human beings share a common nature, and therefore we are in one another. Indeed, "every human being, by the fact of possessing the whole of human nature, enjoys a capacity to understand and love everything that the rest of the subjects of identical nature can think, perceive, act and suffer" (Thomas) [882] , which already indicates some kind of solidarity towards others. And, on the other hand, because we can prove biblically that the patriarchs and prophets -called by God in the Old Covenant- were always chosen with the purpose of benefiting all the people.

> The choice of the individual to be a theological person and the choice of the community by God are to be considered as "simultaneous" events, belonging to the same order, even as two complementary aspects of the same event (883) .

Thus, for example, in the case of Abraham, he was chosen as an instrument for the election and blessing of Israel, in such a way that the two elections were but a single act, where it was not possible to separate one election from the other. And for Israel, this became an archetypal situation, which will be repeated with the rest of the elect, and will even be valid for Israel's relationship with the rest of the peoples: Israel's election had the purpose of making all peoples recognize Yahweh.

But every call of the Old Testament is only a foretaste of Christ, and in Christ it finds its ultimate reason for being. It was Christ - who fulfilled to the extreme his mission, which was completely identified with his person - who opened up the possibility for every spiritual subject "to receive a personal and, therefore, social mission," since now "they find themselves within the space marked by the real person (psychic-pneumatic and also Trinitarian) of Jesus Christ, in whose sacramentality they participate in a truly mysterious way." In Christ, then, this natural solidarity of entities among themselves is fulfilled and the social mission to which each one is called is brought to its fullness. And, just as there are different types of call and diversity of missions, there are also very different ways of responding to the call or, what

amounts to the same thing, different types of ecclesial vocations-missions. But all of them live within the space of Christ. This is what Balthasar has called the "Christological constellation" [884] : diversity of ways of following Christ and of fulfilling the common mission [885] . Thus, for example, we find Peter and the Twelve, who embody the ministry; Paul, as the archetype of the charismatic gifts; John is the beloved disciple, who lives the fullness of love; James, as fidelity to tradition. Even, still biblically, we can see Mary Magdalene, forgiven sinner and then sent; or Mary of Bethany, who represents the contemplative life. And from then on we see, throughout history, an endless series of qualitative missions, official and unofficial, masculine and feminine, that shape the infinite possibilities of response offered by the call to be a *person* in Christ, which is always a social mission: e.g., the vocations of theologians like Augustine, founders like Francis, popes like Gregory, or women like Hildegard (mystic and abbess). All of them are examples of the *Christological constellation,* which is another way of referring to the Church in the aspect of her multiple vocations to a single mission, at once personal and common. However, all these vocations in the Church are preceded by a response - that is, a vocation - "more fundamental": Mary. "This personal mission, which is at the source of all intra-ecclesial universality, is most singular in itself and embraces the ecclesial missions mentioned" [886] , in such a way "that the ecclesial subject is incoatively present in Mary", she thus being a sort of "personal center of the Church" [887] (this last deserves further explanation, which Balthasar will give a little later). Thus it is that the diverse *responses* given *in Christ* constitute the one Church as a Christological constellation, with diverse vocations and missions, but forming an inseparable unity.

Consequently, the response is part of the same vocation and mission, since, along with being in direct dependence on the call of Christ, it has a personal element that implies human cooperation. Therefore, the call and the personal development of this ecclesial vocation constitute an inseparable unity and a *relationship* with its own theological and anthropological characteristics. This opens the way to understanding the second constitutive aspect of the response.

The answer and the woman

Balthasar now applies to our theme one of his fundamental hermeneutical criteria: the analogy between the Trinitarian and the created, that is, the Trinitarian traces in creation and, at the same time, the existence - transcendental and absolute - of the created goodness in the Trinity. Now, since the fundamental ecclesial figure is Mary -woman-, then we enter into the male-female relationship in order to better understand the Christ-Church, husband-wife relationship, according to Eph 5:21-33, applying this and the previous hermeneutical criterion (the social character of every response). This is justified for two reasons. Because, as we have

seen above, a fundamental dimension of the human being is "the male-female polarity" - a theme he dealt with extensively in *Theodramatica* II - and, therefore, the incarnation of the Word and the redemption carried out by the Word made man, cannot completely dispense with this fundamental human polarity [888] . And, in continuity with the foregoing, because the fact that "the Word of God appears in the world as a man" "cannot be indifferent" [889] . From this he deduces a profound and ineliminable link between *response* and *woman*. His thought is structured around three affirmations [(890)] .

1. From the second account of creation, which affirms that man found only in woman an adequate response to his incompleteness (Gen 2:18-25), Balthasar maintains that in this creational design "woman is essentially a response", in the double sense - etymological - of the German word *Ant-Word* (= response), that is, of being *in front of another* and of being *toward another*. Two meanings: "direction towards something and opposition to something" [891] . This means, in the biblical story -for Balthasar-, that "if the man is the word that calls, the woman is the answer that ultimately answers him in her tone, in a mediation of mutual correspondence" [892] . The word that calls is only fulfilled where there is an answer; without an answer there is no word either, because it is not realized as such. Hence, since "man is, moreover, incapable of procuring for himself the being that responds to him," it can only be given to him as grace. Thus, both are on the same level, since, although the male appears as primary, the impossibility that each has of living without the other and of being unable to give the other to himself, puts them on an equal footing. All this is reinforced by the word "face," which is a visual parallel to the acoustic concept of "response." "The face is, then, that which looks me in the face. Man and woman meet face to face. Here the equality of rank appears even more strongly accentuated." In response, woman is, in addition, according to the biblical text, "the necessary help, the shelter, the home of man, the vessel of fullness modeled expressly for him" [893] . And another important aspect is that the woman is here "the true principle of creatural fecundity", since in the encounter with the man, the woman gives him a double response: she returns his gaze in the I-you relationship, but also gives him "something new in which his gift is integrated and which comes to him in an unexpectedly new figure", that is, her "response as reproduction", which is a greater gift than that received and which only she can give, even though it depends on the two [(894)] .

In this first broad consideration, beyond all cultural conditioning, which both the biblical text and Balthasar himself - naturally - possess, his intention is to affirm four aspects that are fundamental for understanding the reality of the Church, due to their anthropological foundation. Four anthropological assertions that must be maintained, even in their paradoxical elements: a certain priority of the male, from which the woman comes, but which

does not make him more important than the woman; the absolute equality of rank of both, in spite of their ineliminable difference; the need for the woman to exist to complete the man; and the characteristic fecundity of the woman, unequaled by the man.

2. From this understanding of the male-female relationship as word-response, Balthasar draws an important consequence for the God-creature relationship. Indeed, if we know that God is absolutely free and generates the Son without any need and only "from the superabundant fullness of his 'disinterested' love". And that equally superabundant and disinterested is the response of the Son, and so is the fruit of mutual love, the Holy Spirit. So "the act of creation is [equally], from Trinitarian freedom, a 'disinterested' communication of this joyful and generous life of self-giving to indigent creatures". And then he deduces the consequence: "from the moment in which every creature [...] is originally the result of a fertilization by the primary, absolute, divine love that gives itself away, from that moment it has a clear analogy with intramundane femininity". That is to say, in the God-creature relationship we can see something like the male-female relationship, an image widely attested in the Bible. And from there a corollary: every created spiritual being, being "feminine", is "disposed for the reception of the seed of the divine Word, in order to carry this seed in itself and give it its full form" [895] . Here we see the application of the anthropological polarity male-female to the God-creature relationship, where every human being -male and female-, being a response to this act of creation, is "feminine", that is, is reception and openness.

3. The third affirmation is the "unfolding of the question". It is that, from the two previous relationships (man-woman and God-world), it is now possible to appreciate well "the Christological position of woman", that is, of the Church. But -again here-, in order to adequately expose the Christ-Church relationship, he must paradoxically unite three affirmations. This is -we know- the only method that is possible for theology when it wants to speak about God. In the first place, Jesus Christ being an individual human being and male, "his relationship to the woman must necessarily also be individual". But being himself the Word of God with a universal mission, that woman as "'help' to whom he is referred [as every male human being] will necessarily have to have, as a representation of this (feminine) humanity before God, a social aspect" [896] . In the second place, Christ, as the second Adam, from his side opened on the cross makes the woman (who is now the Church)-from whom the male cannot do without-emerge as the fullness of the creation now brought about in the mystery of Christ-Church (Eph 5:27,33). And, finally, since the Word of God can only become incarnate through a woman who fulfills a human conception, pregnancy and birth, then there is also a perpetual relationship "between mother and (male) son". With this - Balthasar concludes - "the man-woman relationship appears from now on as a definitive relationship"

[897] ; furthermore, it can be seen that both Mariology and ecclesiology depend on Christology; and, finally, Mary now has a relationship with Christ as mother and wife. With all this, the ineliminable link between answer and woman has been expressed.

How to understand this theology?

In the preceding pages, Balthasar has applied to Mariology and ecclesiology his theology of male-female polarity, which was consigned in *Theodramatica* II, and in that context these pages should be understood. There he affirmed:

> Man, in the finished creation, is a "dual unity", "two distinct but inseparable realities, of which one is the fullness of the other, and both are ordered towards a definitive unity that has no limit"; "however, to be double does not mean that the unity is multiplied by two: it is simply a single reality with two poles, two actualizations of a single being, two *entia* in a single *esse,* one existence in two lives [(A. Frank-Duquesne)]. Frank-Duquesne) ...] With such approximate formulations one tries to transcribe the mystery that the male as man is always turned to his counterpart, the woman, and yet never reaches her, and, conversely, neither does the woman to the man; that - if one takes this relationship as a paradigm - the human self is always in search of a thou and indeed finds it [...], but without ever being able to appropriate this otherness (898) .

Balthasar describes the human being as polar-structured, affirming that he is "forced to pass constantly from one pole to the other, in order to seek each time in the other pole his complement and his peace" [899] . This brings to light the essential relationality of the human being, which implies two *equals* "always turned to their counterpart. Now, by transferring this complementary relationship between equals (male-female) to Mariology and ecclesiology, it is now applied to a relationship between *unequals* such as God and the creature (Christ-Church/ Mary). This is what immediately makes this application complex, because then, when inverting the analogy, that is, from the God-creature relationship, applying its consequences to the male-female relationship, a sort of inequality appears (in fact) -because the underlying model is between unequals- in this relationship (in spite of Balthasar's explicit affirmation to the contrary), which should always be of equals. Hence, it is important to understand this point well - in its possibilities and limits - before continuing with the exposition of his ecclesiology and Mariology, in order to be fair and truthful with this author and with the objective of his reflections, and to be able to understand him in his context and complexity, and without denying his limitations.

Without being able to enter into the important problem of cultural influence (both in the Bible and in the theology of each era) and of the long patriarchal tradition that weighs on us as a society and as a Church, we must be aware that Balthasar is a man of his time and of his culture, in such a way that it is not possible to abstract him from his temporal and social

context in which and from which he presents his valuable theology. In this sense, we cannot ask him to have our own current awareness that in the distinction of genders and in the languages and symbols used, beyond the psychic-biological, also plays an important role the structural and cultural as construction of models, where social forms and languages that imply, and even encourage, gender inequality are naturalized and made invisible.

But, in order to understand it properly, it is important to keep in mind the following. First of all, with regard to Mariology and ecclesiology, for Balthasar, in the analogy between male-female and Christ-Church/Mary we must never lose sight of the fact that between God and creature there is an insuperable difference, while between male and female there must always be an insuperable equality, something that Balthasar tirelessly repeats. This makes the image of Christ-Church as male-female, and vice versa, always complex and in need of permanent critical correction. The same must be said for the characteristics that Balthasar applies to each of the poles (male-female): priority-complement and donation-receptivity. They cannot be understood in the same way in the God-creature relationship as in the male-female relationship. The Lateran IV principle remains especially valid here: whatever we say about God (and his [incarnate] Word) starting from the creature (or creaturely image), must always be understood at starting from a greater dissimilarity. Therefore, as a consequence of this, the priority and initiative of God with respect to the creature cannot be understood as a sign of an alleged "superiority" of the male over the female. In the case of male-female, when speaking of donation and priority, it must necessarily be understood from the absolute equality between the two (always affirmed by Balthasar) with the meaning of mutual complementarity, understanding, moreover, that language is always limiting and does not render full justice to reality (and sometimes it certainly has biases). In this sense, the above statement must be complemented with the affirmation of the *superiority* of female fecundity or of the *fullness* acquired by women. Here there will always be a paradoxical relationship, where structural difference must be in rigorous parallel with fundamental equality. This is how these differentiating characteristics must be understood in the male-female symbology, which will then vary in some aspects when applied to the Christ-Church relationship.

Accepting this, it is equally true that several of its affirmations today do not sound quite right, or can be misinterpreted, or it is difficult to understand how they are compatible with male-female equality [900] . For example: How is gender equality compatible with the primacy of the male? Doesn't the interpretation of the word and the answer referring respectively to the male and female seem asymmetrical? Isn't the relationship between initiative (male) and receptivity (female) also asymmetrical? Isn't the relationship of both, in saying that he needs her to reach his fullness, seen only from the male's point of view? Does not the male-female

relationship appear too centered on the terms of sexuality and reproduction? [901] In general, there is abundant conscious and critical literature on this, but which also insists that Balthasar must be interpreted in the globality of his theology and in the objective he seeks.

However, it is also true -and it is very important- that, in this same context, Balthasar -like few theologians of his time- takes seriously and in all its depth the theme of sexual or gender difference and tries to deepen this theme as rigorously as possible, in order to bring a new understanding of the human being and of God [902] . This is a contribution that cannot be minimized and that is in tune with the most current philosophical and theological research. Likewise, Balthasar's vision of woman is in no way negative, on the contrary, as Karen Kilby affirms, "those attributes or activities that Balthasar considers to be specifically feminine, Balthasar seems to give them the highest value, insofar as they are the proper creatural mode of responding to God and of the Church to Christ (such that all of us must become more 'feminine' in order to be authentically Christian), and also insofar as they are divine attributes, as ways in which, in the eternal life of the Trinity, God relates to God" [903] . In this he departs completely from any misogynistic ecclesial tradition. And he also demonstrated this in his own life and theological reflection - as is evident from his own biography - particularly by the central and "authoritative" place he always accorded to Adrienne von Speyr in his own theology [904] . This cannot be underestimated when reading his work.

One more element. Balthasar also introduces the theme of the masculine-feminine when he tries to "explain" some of what happens in the Trinity:

> Finally, the divine unity of doing and letting do-whose equivalence in love was shown-is translated on the world plane into bisexuality. In the Trinity, the Father, as the unoriginated generator, appears primarily as (super-)masculine; the Son as the one who lets do, appears first as (super-)feminine, but then, as an active spirant together with the Father, appears as (super-)masculine; the Spirit appears as (super-)feminine. And inasmuch as the Father, as was seen, in his generating and breathing forth always allows himself to be co-determined by those who proceed from him, he even has a (super-)feminine, without his primacy of order being affected thereby. Precisely the trinitarian in God forbids projecting the worldly-sexual into the divinity (as happens in many religions and in Gnostic syzygies). We will have to be content with seeing the ever new reciprocity of doing and letting do, which is in turn a form of activity and fertility, as the immeasurable origin of what in the world of created life is translated as the form and possibility of love and its fertility in sexuality (905) .

Some very significant things can be deduced here: the Father and the Son have both masculine and feminine characteristics, so that both characteristics cannot be considered as opposites, but complementary, even in the divine persons. And, with this, the meaning of the masculine and feminine is concentrated specifically and principally around the relationship, more than in the corporeal, although this is not unimportant. But, in addition, since in the

Trinity everything that happens is simultaneous, and all the differences are of equal dignity, then it is seen that in this divine moment there is no justification whatsoever for thinking of the feminine as opposed to the masculine and reception as opposed to donation, as less important moments or of inferior dignity [906] . And, finally, here once again the equality between doing and letting do, activity and fertility is affirmed, despite the fact that the Trinitarian order is maintained. This is one more paradoxical element - like so many others in Balthasar's theology - with which he does justice to the *mystery* that is God (and the human being as his image).

In synthesis, Balthasar's "theology of the sexes" must be understood in its cultural context and within the totality of his theology. This implies, in the first place, not to ask him neither reflections nor language that were neither in his environment nor in his objectives; but equally - for this very reason - not to draw *hasty* conclusions, based on his theology, for new questions that arose after his reflections. On the other hand, it is important to assume, from a hermeneutic coherent with his thought, that all the reflection on male-female -and from there the consequences for the understanding of Christ-Church- are under his theological postulates both about the *form* and the *positivity of the other*. This implies that, regardless of how he concretely describes "receptivity" and the feminine - in relation to "priority" and the masculine - the heart of the matter is that each is a form/totality that is always in reference to the other and needs the other as its own "fragment". Here, the fundamental referent is always the Trinity: hence the theme of the *face* and the *reflection.* That the "other" exists and that I need it in order to be myself is something good and divine (as the Father needs the Son in order to be Father). From all this, we have to say that, in spite of the limitations of the language used and the new challenges produced by cultural changes, Balthasar's reflection is fully valid and points to a fundamental nucleus that must be understood from his own affirmations, which often appear paradoxical.

Thus, for Balthasar, the Church and Christians are *feminine,* in which Mary is the ultimate model, because the fundamental human form is precisely reception (which is true for both male and female). The feminine being is receptively active (like the Son in the Trinity). The masculine and the feminine need each other, and are equal as human existences in their distinctive way of existing; for when we speak of a certain order or priority in the bi-sexual reality of humanity, we are not speaking of a plus and a minus, but of another way of saying complementarity. Thus, the ecclesial and theological task will be to value - and also to live - all these affirmations harmoniously. In this sense, Balthasar does not solve all the problems, nor does he give practical solutions, but he raises some principles that are important for a better understanding of ecclesial and human life. Certainly, new conclusions can be drawn

from this, but this must be done on the basis of his basic thinking and not simply from the materiality of the terms. Bearing in mind all these criteria, we can now advance in the understanding of the Church, starting from this symbolism that is so important in Balthasarian thought.

Mary, type of the Church

With all that has been said above, it is clear that Mariology and ecclesiology imply each other, but -according to Balthasar- Mariology must be treated first because "it deals with the Mother of the Savior without whom there would be neither a structured Church nor divine grace in the history of the world before and after Christ" [907] . Balthasar devotes more than 40 pages to present the fundamental elements of a Mariology (without any pretension of covering all the topics) [908] , always starting from the idea of the *woman's response* (now we can better understand the meaning of this phrase). He does this from three aspects: (1) He shows the theological challenges that all Mariology faces because of the polarities of Mary/ woman; (2) He outlines her person in reference to Christ and the Church, starting from a certain historical development of Mariology; (3) He exposes the dramaticity (= tensions) of Mary's life (which is also analogously the dramaticity of the Church).

1. The theological challenges - which Balthasar calls *Prolegomena for Mariology* - can be summarized in three. First, there are two polarities proper to Mary: (1) as a woman, in the sense that she is oriented toward the male (as a response, which then depends on the word addressed to her) and, at the same time, is independent of him (just as the male is also oriented toward the female and, therefore, both identities are always polar and never univocal or fixed); (2) historically, by virtue of being oriented toward Jesus, as bride on the cross and as mother in the conception. So she "cannot be 'reduced' to univocity", nor can one postulate "a 'fundamental principle' from which all her capital aspects could be derived" [909] ; but one must take into account that she is a historical person, who needs an extension of time to realize her vocation and her reality. From there that - the second challenge - Mariology can never dispense with the narrative element of the biblical episodes (because Mary's life developed historically and from that development "its theological content" is discovered), which must always be "referred concentrically to the center of her mission" [910] . This also makes it understandable that the development of the Mariological doctrine, in the different historical moments, has emphasized different aspects. And the third challenge is two difficulties that have arisen throughout history. One difficulty has been how to reconcile the fact that the initiative of redemption is exclusively God's and does not require the collaboration of anyone to be realized, with the need - if it was to be truly incarnated - to count on the free acceptance - that is, the collaboration - of women and their fruitfulness [911] .

And the second difficulty has been to know "in what relation is this cooperation with the action of God in his incarnate Word" (912) .

2. Then, from a historical overview, where he shows the successes and legitimate developments of the Mariological doctrine; but also, with great clarity and honesty, the "oscillation between excesses and calls for moderation" 913 , and even the extravagances of a certain "pious fantasy" - which was not only "understandable scandal" for the Protestants, but also a clear departure "from the authentic Catholic tradition" 914 -; Balthasar presents "the profile of [the] person" of Mary, starting from "Mary's position in the face of Christ and the Church" 915 . Three historical moments can be appreciated, which emphasize that Mary is a *woman for Christ and for the Church,* where the third moment - Vatican II - is a stage of synthesis.

The patristic period is characterized by two general affirmations. It confesses a clear "superiority of the Church over Mary", since it

> the Virgin Mary first gives birth (carnally) to the Head of the Church, so that she is *typos* [= model] of the original Church which, as the bride of Christ, begets (spiritually) in baptism the faithful, who, in turn, as belonging to the Church, can become, by virtue of their obedience of faith, mothers of Christ (916) .

Along these lines, Augustine makes it clear that Mary is a supereminent member of the Church, but, in the end, only *a member* of the whole body which, as such, is more than one of its parts. But it is also recognized that "the virginal maternity of Mary presupposed on her part a perfect act of faith" 917 , which is a spiritual act of obedient faith, which makes her a prototype, and, consequently, Mary also possesses a unique holiness. In these two great convictions the mother of Christ appears as the *typos* of the Church, by her faith and by her carnal fruitfulness.

In the Middle Ages the situation is reversed, since now "it is Mary first" "who will take advantage over the Church insofar as she precedes her as her prototype and her real symbol and insofar as, as an individual person, she is situated 'in front of' Christ". This was probably due to the accentuation of Marian worship, feasts and devotion. Thus,

> In general, the idea that Mary is the *typos* of the Church continues to be nourished, but as the Church now begins to contemplate herself in her prototype, her biblical attributes, especially those of "spouse of Christ" and of the new Eve as "companion" of the new Adam, are passed on to Mary; in this way the "ecclesiotypical" context is responsible for an ultimately overwhelming "christotypicality" (918) .

Thus the Middle Ages can now be considered as a period in which Mariology was predominantly Christological, and in which confidence in Mary's intercession grew enormously and her *yes* to the incarnation was especially valued. Moreover, it is no longer the

Church, but Mary herself, who is the immaculate and holy spouse, and therefore she is both the mother of the mystical body and the bride of Christ. Thus, many of the ecclesial attributes are now applied to Mary, as the nucleus of the Church. This development is perfectly in accordance with doctrine.

From there, however, it moved - almost imperceptibly - towards a certain equality between Mary and Christ, with such criticizable results as the abandonment of "Mary's ecclesiotypy in favor of a unilateral christotypy", or the likening of Mary's "mediation" to that of Christ, to the point of a universal, omnipotent and (quasi) divine intercession, or making her enjoy quasi-divine privileges (919) .

In the twentieth century it was "only [the] calm and serious return to the biblical data and a reconsideration of the patristic view of the Mary-Church relationship[,] [that] prepared the turn in Mariology that culminated in the Second Vatican Council" [920] . In this third moment, the integration of the doctrine on Mary within the *Constitution on the Church* was a high point that could no longer be surpassed. Although *Lumen gentium* does not claim to be a complete Mariology and, therefore, also has its limitations (for example, it does not call her the spouse of Christ and, with regard to believers, its task is rather minimalist), its teaching takes up the patristic Mariology and its prolongation in the Middle Ages, and then refers to "Mary as a real symbolic model of the Church who turns her eyes to her in order to resemble her in faith, hope and charity" (LG 65, 68) (921) .

3. Balthasar culminates the description of Mary as a type of the Church [922] , by exposing the theological difficulty of her living among different *statuses,* which also shows the challenges of the Church itself, since it also finds itself in such a situation:

> Mary is a dramatic character above all because of her existence between all the *statuses* of human nature, not only between her belonging to the Old Testament, to the time of Jesus and to that of the Church, but in a wider radius between a paradisiacal existence (supralapsarian) and an existence in the fallen state, and even eschatologically between this last existence and the final consummation. Thus she does not seem to find herself really in her place except with her Son who bears and overcomes these same tensions, or ultimately in a Church that should at least bear them, although most of the time she does not want to. For theology this synthesis of all the *statuses* in Mary has understandably involved great difficulties and even with the binding formulations reached after long effort, a definitive perspective on the mode of her unity has not yet been guaranteed (923) .

There are three dramatic tensions in Mary that, as the type of the Church, also illuminate ecclesiology [924] . The first tension is the need for Mary, as the true mother of Jesus, on the one hand, to belong to the human lineage in need of redemption (so that the Word could be incarnated as true man), but, on the other hand, precisely as mother of the Savior, "she must be totally holy and 'immaculate'. How can these two things be reconciled?" [925] . Dogmatically

it was resolved with the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. This means that she lives in what we might call an "intermediate position" "between paradise and the fallen state," since, although in Mary-by her immaculate conception-the original state of holiness has been restored, nevertheless, that state is now conceived "as a state which [makes] her capable not only of living and suffering in the darkness of faith, but also of participating without sin" in those situations that can be understood as defects and limitations [926] . That is to say, she lives her human life in full holiness, but under the (fragile) present condition. This has allowed her to transmit to her Son, in all purity, the human reality; and, at the same time, to be able to suffer with her Son throughout her life as spouse and helper. In this way, she is in a singular relationship, not only with her Son, but also with all the other saved, under a condition of special solidarity. Hence two consequences: her motherhood now manifests "the new and authentic birth, not to a mortal life, but to a divine life for Christ himself and for Christians", so that "Mary's womb and that of the Church are seen as a strict unity". And, also, with her, this new relationship is established, where Mary is mother and spouse of Christ, since "Mary was recognized as identical in her being with the most intimate essence of the *ecclesia* immaculata" [927] . In this way the typological character of Mary with respect to the Church is especially evident [(928)] .

The second tension is given in the fact that Mary "as a carnal mother is in direct relationship with the generations coming from Adam through Abraham, while as a virginal mother, who has become pregnant thanks to her yes to the Spirit who has covered her with his shadow, she signals a rupture and a new beginning" [929] . In this way, she is the synthesis of all the hopes of Israel - and of all humanity - as the perfect Daughter of Zion who gives birth to a descendant of David and, at the same time, since the child is conceived by the work of the Holy Spirit, a new type of birth begins, putting an end to descent according to the flesh and replacing it with the new birth based on faith in the Word. It is in this context that the perpetual virginity of Mary is understood here, a theme that should not be approached from a physiological point of view, but from a theological point of view [930] . For a correct understanding, three aspects must be taken into account. What we have said about "Mary being the *typos* of the Church and of the new birth that is to take place in her". Furthermore, that "Mary is the real symbol and compendium of this same Church", that is, in her is perfectly fulfilled what the Church is. And, thirdly, that "she is (Christologically) the place where the new birth actually takes place with the appearance of her Son", that is, from her maternity the new baptized arise (then). Now, according to this triple aspect, "the event of the incarnation must be characterized not only as 'symbolic' but also as 'sacramental'" (Laurentin), that is to say, it is a symbology linked to an effect, in which that symbology operates precisely

what is symbolized (the sacraments act by signifying, as Thomas affirms). Consequently, from the "symbolic character of the human body", "and of the virginity of the Virgin in particular" in "the perspective of the incarnation of the Logos", the immaculate one who gives birth to it "must be, precisely in her corporeality, the prototype of Christian integrity, realized in all its aspects, by realizing also corporeally (according to Ambrose) what the Church realizes spiritually" [931] . In this way, in the magisterium and in theology, perpetual virginity was proclaimed, including *virginitas in partu* (although the latter did not need to be explicitly defined). Once again, it is a question of the sacramental (bodily) symbolism of Mary as a successful type of what the Church wants to be: integral in her holiness.

And the third tension, which is the strongest, is the eschatological tension between time and eternity [932] . This means that Mary, "the true Mother of the living," gives birth to the Messiah and his brothers "from a paradise regained," which is "her immaculate conception," but she does so "in the pains of childbirth at the foot of the cross, as befits the fallen state" to which this innocent woman is subjected [933] . Thus, Mary gives birth - in this fallen world - to the fruit for eternal life. Now, because of the typological identity between Mary and the Church, we can see, in Rev 12, the drama between the situation of salvation already accomplished and the struggle that still has to be sustained on this earth, both for Mary and for the Church: "a dramatic earthly one as a consequence of a decision already made in heaven" [934] . This is the context for understanding Mary's Assumption into heaven. She, as a human woman, "is subject to the law of mortality", "but it is not as a sinner that she is subject to this law". Although it is impossible to express - with the categories available to us - what her death was like, nevertheless, we can say that it was "a death among the aeons", "and according to the whole life of the 'lowly handmaid', it may have been a completely unnoticed event" (935) .

In short, Mary's role is universal and in some way "coextensive with that of Christ," since "Christ as *man* needs the feminine complement just as much as the first man," as a consequence of the incarnation and the historicity of salvation. But there is also a difference: "Christ, as Son *of God,* remains superior, above all need of complement", in such a way that "the maternity and spousality of Mary depend on the pure and free redemptive decision of the Trinitarian God" [936] ; not so in the male-female relationship and complementarity, which must necessarily be equal (here again we see the meaning of the symbolism used, but also its limitations and the precautions with which it must be used). The Christ-Mary relationship must always remain irreducibly "within the God-creature inequality". "Finally Mary is the culmination of fruitfulness" "and in this sense the *typos* of the Church", which means that (1) she is the model of the Church that spiritually gives birth to Christ, (2) she is the model of the obedient believer by faith, and (3) she is the unsurpassable archetypal model, as the definitive

image of the Church [937] . With this it has become clear that Mariology is inseparable from both Christology and ecclesiology [(938)] .

The Church as a response

The Church -woman- constitutes herself as a response to the mission (= vocation) entrusted to her, which, according to Balthasar's basic theological principle, also constitutes her as a theological character -as a concrete partner-, in the face of the also concrete figure of Jesus, and as a collaborator in the unique mission of Christ [939] . Here Balthasar develops the core of his conception of the Church. According to what we have already seen, the Church is essentially conformed from Christ, with an internal dependence on Mary -mother and spouse-, and in the drama of being, at the same time, spouse and institution. These are Balthasar's essential points.

1. *Universal response.* The Church is constituted on the basis of Christ-as his response-but this necessarily supposes that it must be incorporated within the universal mission of Jesus, and that it must embrace all human beings in some way; otherwise, it would be in contradiction with the need of all men to be reconciled with God. This, then, is its condition of possibility. And indeed this is how it has been constituted, within the universal plan of God, which "inseparably embraces creation and its redemption".

The human being, from creation as "image and likeness of God" -but being non-God-, is "irremissibly before God", which testifies to the generosity of God who gives to every human being the responsibility and freedom to be him/herself and from him/herself [940] . Now, the order of redemption is founded and fulfilled in that same order of creation, since "the essential image of God" and archetype of creation - the Word - has made himself bodily present and has recapitulated everything in himself, becoming true man. Thus "an unusual concentration" took place in "the man Jesus," who became, for the world, the image of the Trinity and, for God, the image of the world. Consequently, if the "Son of God has conformed himself in his divine mission to all humanity", in the same way "there should correspond to him in his form that concentrates humanity another human form equally concentrated as a response" - because of the need for a help of equal dignity inscribed in the male-female complementarity, but "on a plane which, in addition to including what corresponds to creation, essentially surpasses it, because as the Son *of God* he cannot bring forth this complementary relationship except from his own substance" [941] -brotch of his side opened on the cross-. And just as in creation he made her his free partner, so here she must be his free partner, "for *he has need* of what has come forth from him as his 'help' for his work, and as that figure who, when he is no longer on earth as a historical personage, will represent him and continue his work." In this way, this free partner, within the framework of all humanity,

must have a concrete figure with the awareness that he is welcoming the kingdom of God, which is universal and with which he now collaborates with his mission. Thus this group of persons - which is the Church in her catholicity - "always surpasses her particular figure in the direction of the fruitfulness of Christ, which extends in favor of all humanity" and thus participates in the redemptive work of Christ for the whole world (942) .

2. *Personage that responds.* If we now ask ourselves *who* this "Church" personage is, Balthasar's answer is precise: it is a harmonious and integrated combination of body and bride of Christ [943] . Indeed, it is one-sided - though not false - to say that the Church, as the body of Christ, is identified with Christ as if they were "one person"; it is also one-sided to say that the Church had "an eternal being, mostly feminine, as Christ's partenaire" [944] (something that is close to the Gnostic syzygias). However, these two tendencies compensate and complement each other when an attempt is made "to find a balance between the Christocentric hermeneutical principle and the pneumatocentric principle of the Church as 'spouse and helper' of Christ" [945] . So it was on the basis of this balance that Balthasar gave us his answer to the initial question, and he did so on the basis of the hermeneutical principles with which he is familiar: with the gift of "any grace a mission is also conferred", and "this mission is both qualitatively personalizing and socializing", so that every particular mission "deprivatizes the self" and extends its radius of action "to the whole 'mystical body' of Christ" (946) .

> In this way the missions and the persons identified with them are interpenetrated with each other, in the face of what is called the *Communio Sanctorum;* where evidently not only the goods and values belonging to the persons become common property, but also the persons themselves (947) .

This is the Christological foundation of the Church, which is born of the mission conferred on each spiritual being - through the Spirit - and which constitutes him or her as a social person *in Christ*. Therefore, the foundation of the Church is truly Christological and pneumatological, in such a way that being a bride face-to-face and being a single great body are two aspects of the same reality. We are his body, but we are equally his brothers and sisters. We are a unity of persons in him, but as such a unity, we are also face-to-face with him as his work and his response. That is why the Church is a true theological personage and not just a body.

3. *Response in Mary*. Although we all form the Church, Mary has a singular position in it, since "insofar as she is the 'bride' before the bridegroom, she is an all-encompassing feminine 'we'". Mary is that feminine face that responds and becomes "the principle of a common fecundity, of an offspring," always in the God-creature difference that is unsurpassable. She is the perfect believer, the one who collaborates in a feminine and creaturely way; and thanks to

the pre-redemption received (immaculate conception), she also collaborates on the cross "for the birth of the Church" [948] . Now, Mary does not claim her Son for herself, but gives him to the Church, and with this "gesture of renunciation of self, Mary's unlimited mission appears":

> By her availability as a woman and as a creature, she resembles the masculine-divine mission of the Son, thus becoming the real and realized prototype of the Church, in which the other particular missions in the Church are integrated. Undoubtedly not by Mary herself, but by the Spirit, who is at the same time the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit who has already formed the mother and her yes of availability after the fundamental response of the Son: "Not my will but yours be done" (949) .

Thus a virtuous circle is created, in which the priority of the immaculate yes is due to the grace of the cross, but, at the same time, the grace of the cross is indebted, by grace itself, to the mother's yes. The mother's yes to the angel and the grace of the cross are two distinct but united moments, and both are mutually necessary. "In this sense it is right to hold to the affirmation that the ecclesial subject is incoatively present in Mary, and that Mary, insofar as she fulfills her personal mission in the self-giving of the Son, can also be called the personal center of the Church" [950] . She is a member of the Church, but she does not disappear as a simple member of it, since she always maintains her double condition of mother and spouse, as two moments that are not reduced to a simple unity; she collaborates doubly-whose vocation is unique and unrepeatable-and on the cross she is already the Church that welcomes the sacrifice of Christ "as woman *and* as creature," that is, as immaculate Church (951) .

4. *Bride as institution.* The Church is constituted as a "personage" that responds to Christ and, in her, Mary is found as the "personal center", in such a way that the Church herself is constituted as a "spouse". However, she is also an institution, which is a condition for her fruitfulness, but at the same time an occasion of profound drama. In fact, the Church, as bride and mother, from "the foundation of the ecclesial 'institution'" receives the fruitfulness that allows her to bring Christ into the world. The institutional, then, does not contradict her nuptial condition, "but, on the contrary, [is] the condition that makes possible her constant actuality throughout history":

> The institution is the guarantee of the constant presence of the bridegroom Christ for his bride Church; and hence it is entrusted to men who, while belonging to the global femininity of the Church, taken from her and remaining in her, possess the ministry and function of personifying Christ who approaches the Church to make her fruitful (952) .

Within this Church, spouse, woman and mother, and at her service, there is the ministry - male and institutional- of direction and representation, which, for this very reason -although its services are permanent- never has the quality and category of the total Church -as perfect and immaculate spouse- whose beginning and fullness is in Mary. In fact, the Church began

with Mary's yes - which synthesized the faith of Israel but at the same time brought it to its full fulfillment - where Mary herself made available her entire fruitfulness, which is active and superior to all human fruitfulness, since she gives birth to the Son of God. And this giving birth to Christ is precisely the fruitfulness that institutionalism perpetuates throughout history. Christ is the origin of both the fundamental feminine principle of the Church and the instrumental masculine ministry, according to the symbolism of male and female created [953] . But both can in no way be considered on the same level, in terms of the objective and purpose of the Church. Thus, nuptiality and institution are not opposed "because the 'bride' herself is an extension and a product of the vitality of Christ, and her fertilization by the 'institution' is only a guarantee for the permanent transmission of the life that proceeds from him" [954] . In this way we can clearly see that institutionality is at the service of nuptiality and, therefore, the global femininity of the Church is maintained, in spite of the fact that the ministry is reserved to men; precisely because the ministry is a personifying function of the male Christ, which does not exclude the minister from his fundamental feminine reality, nor does it exempt him from his obligations as a member of the Church as bride.

Finally, the objective of all this reflection, starting from the male-female symbolism -which must be understood precisely as such-, has been to intimately characterize the Church starting from the *feminine* qualities (which are already discovered in God), which Balthasar considers of the highest importance and beauty, and which describe the mission and identity of the Church; at the same time they show the secondary, subordinate and only representative (although indispensable) rank of every ministry in the Church [955] . And with this, the drama of this wife-institution relationship has also become evident.

5. *Permanent tension between nuptiality and institution.* The relationship between nuptiality-institution has an *internal drama* that comes from the very reality of *the Church as bride and institution* [956] and from the fact that "the institution is the guarantee of the constant presence of the bridegroom Christ for his bride Church" [957] . Balthasar tries to clarify this relationship a little better on the basis of five successive aspects [958] . (1) "A first aspect is the necessary incarnationist tendency" of revelation, due to the basic corporeal characteristic of human life. The Word needed a corporeality to come to us. And this "we" that stands before Christ as "bride" must also have, as a "social unit, a bodily constitution. But she cannot arbitrarily give herself that institutionality, "but it must be rooted in her unchangeable essential structure, just as the inner pneumatic vitality has been poured into her," because her origin and mission are from above and not of her own initiative. Form (immutable) and life (divine) are inseparable in the Church. Here we understand the ecclesial ministry - also founded by Christ - insofar as the Church "constantly receives her being and her life from the sources of the

incarnate God and never from herself" [959] . (2) "The event *(événement)* of the 'birth' of the Church from Christ is a permanent event that takes place at every moment, and the permanent ministerial structure *(institution)* is that which guarantees the possibility of participating at all times in the original event" [960] . (3) "The subjective love and holiness" of each member presupposes that there is also "an objective love and holiness within the Church". This implies that God - since all holiness is always born of God - sends his Spirit to the Church to "educate" sinners through its own structures. And, furthermore, that there must be a Church of saints (on earth and in heaven) together with an objective ministry that sanctifies [961] . (4) The Holy Spirit has freed us - in divine filiation - for a complete Marian yes. This means that *all* must walk in the freedom of the following of Christ, which must be applied in the same way to *all* the faithful, including obviously all ministry and service. Here we can see once again the drama or tension between the bride Church and the ministry founded in her. (5) That tension is summed up in the polarity of ministry and prophecy. "Tradition and the instinct of faith are rooted in the whole Church," "but the episcopal ministry has the mission of watching over the authenticity of the 'prophetic' sense of the faith of the whole people." Herein lies the internal drama between the subjective-Marian and the objective-Petrine, because the discerner is also *under* the prophetic Spirit of the common faith [962] . Dramatic is also "the encounter between the vital knowledge of the believer" and the ministerial wisdom of authority. Both presuppose and need each other, since authority must also be *within* the believing love [963] . And this tension reaches its extreme point in the sacraments, where the presence of Christ is maximal: *ex opere operato* [= by the efficacy of what is worked] (but which always presupposes *ex opere operantis* [= by the action of the one who acts] if it is to be fruitful and ultimately useful) [964] . On the other hand, in the proclamation of the Word, the tension is towards the other extreme, since there the personal enters much more strongly, which finds its limit only in dogma. And finally, in the pastoral function, the only security is the promise that, in spite of everything, the Church will not be destroyed [965] . The different points of balance in these three tensions (sacrament, word and pastoral guidance) have not always been duly taken into account in the life of the Church, with negative consequences, especially for the common faithful and their ecclesial responsibility and maturity.

6. *Church as prolongation of the divine.* The Church, as a prolongation by faith "of the person and mediatorial work of Christ," "lives objectively (in her institution and sacraments) and subjectively (in her saints and basically in all her members)" in a permanent interchange between heaven and earth, since "she lives from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven" [966] . Since the world has been created in the Word, and then has been redeemed and

recapitulated in the Word made flesh, the world then needs the Word to develop properly. For that reason, the Church which - as a response - continues the work of Christ "is first of all a reality established by heaven in time", that is, a reality that is born "through the unity of the Trinity", "the presence, but living, of eternity in time" (A. von Speyr) [967] . With this, Balthasar -following Adrienne von Speyr - wants to affirm that

> ecclesial life is essentially participation in the life of the God-Man, who as such-as God and as man-always leads an explicitly Trinitarian life: from God the Father and always toward him; both directions in the Holy Spirit. And as this from and toward are in accord with his eternal filiation, so his economic movement is not only a movement limited by historical time, but a movement that extends from there beyond limited time, because his historical return to the Father is given as an ever new (Eucharistic) coming to his Church (and in his Church to the world) (968) .

Finally, it is a question here of evoking the eschatological character of the Church, which must never be forgotten. The Church was born of the Trinity and lives from it and in it. Therefore, the sacraments she gives are always the eschatological presence of Christ, through the action of the Spirit, and all her work of love and charity on this earth bears fruit in heaven. And the communion of the saints is a communion of heaven and earth. Therefore, all its mission and its structure adapted for the mission have their ultimate purpose in that eternal and Trinitarian fullness, where this sacramental institutionality will no longer be necessary. All this shows us what is important in the Church: in love, in holiness and in everything that transcends this world towards eternity, that is, in the permanent *response* of the human being to God. This, moreover, has been the goal of creation and redemption: to make all human beings participate in the Trinitarian life in this eternal dialogue of infinite enrichment in love. The Church, in short, has no other purpose than to be the instrument and inchoative realization of human incorporation into the Trinity.

Many answers in one answer

A final way to characterize the Church as a response is to review the various forms of response that exist in her (since she as a "subject" is concretized only in particular persons), some of which can be defined as *archetypal* experiences, insofar as they are characteristic and fundamental forms of responding to God's call and of collaborating in the ecclesial mission, to which all are called and must participate in some way [969] . Balthasar affirms:

> This foundation of the Church's unity [the Spirit of Christ and of God, who unites individuals by raising them up interiorly] only becomes concrete in its members, and since some of these members possess archetypal experiences, which they give to the common treasury of the *communio sanctorum* so that they may redound to the benefit of all, there is nothing to prevent us from attributing to the Church a similar experience. But the archetypal experience of each of the members is only a privileged participation in the

experience of God that Christ possesses and on which everything rests. In fact, Christ makes the whole Church participate in his experience, directly associating each member of the Church to himself and at the same time mediating between some members and others, so that all are incorporated into him (970) .

Balthasar, starting from what is narrated in the New Testament, has basically established *four* archetypal experiences (which have become characteristic of Balthasar's ecclesiological "form"), which develop in ecclesial life as "expressions of the unpredictable dispensations of the free and sovereign Holy Spirit of Christ and of the Church" 971 . They are ways of living the faith, from which a believer, moved by the Spirit, can cooperate in the work of the Church. They are the *Petrine, Pauline, Johannine and Marian* traditions.

The *Petrine* tradition, from the ocular witness of Peter, revolves around the preaching of the "kerygma and its realization in the Christian life", in such a way that the Church, welcoming that witness, can participate in "the vision and experience of Peter". "We find ourselves, then, with the perspective of the hierarchical tradition (and its consequent exclusivism), which founds the ocular witness by the kerygma and the sacrament of the Church, and thus places the actuality of the Christ archetype in the moral realization of the preached creed" 972 . It is the apostolic ministry, always indispensable in the Church, as a gift and service for the Church herself, and which is transmitted by succession throughout history (973) .

The *Pauline* tradition, as a charism that comes from on high, is "the ever new and unforeseen vertical irruption of new charisms in the history of the Church" 974 . The charisms, insofar as gifts of the Spirit, are something that will always exist in the Church, but always as an unexpected, gratuitous and discontinuous gift.

> And since everything is pure grace, Paul has no reason to think that the Spirit will not repeat in the history of the Church archetypal missions and experiences like his: naturally, their sign of authenticity will be (even more than in the case of Paul himself) submission to Peter, but they will come directly from the "Jerusalem above" and will make them sensible through the testimony of the word and life (975) .

The *Johannine* tradition in a certain sense synthesizes the two previous traditions, since it unites transmitted preaching with the gift of prophecy, and unites them furthermore with contemplative vision, in order to unify everything in love, for which everything is possible. "The incomprehensible elevation of his love separates him from all others and introduces him into the archetypal sphere." Moreover, as a contemplative, he maintains "a permanent and mysterious connection between the vision above and the faith below", in such a way that the greater the love and contemplative capacity, the greater value will also have "the earthly form of the Church" as "incarnational expansion of its reality" (976) .

The *Marian* tradition, with all that has been said in this chapter, has already been basically

presented. Balthasar synthesizes it here:

> The threefold archetypal experience of Christ, which the apostles transmitted to the Church for her use, is sustained and included by the Marian experience, which is ineffable because of its very simplicity and depth. It is prior to the apostolic experience and conditions it totally, since Mary, as mother of the head, is also mother of the whole body (977) .

The experience of Marian faith - a possibility open to every Christian - is the experience of faith in an immaculate, upright and unsurpassable way, in spite of being in the midst of the hardships of earthly life.

These four archetypal ways of experiencing faith are not unattainable, but each in its own way manifests to the believer a vital way of how he can live his own faith, through the transmission of faith in the Church.

The Church is a mediating people in the midst of peoples

All that Balthasar has said about the Church as a response - feminine, personal - can be properly understood and will make sense only when we consider a second equally important aspect, that is, "its social structure as a 'people' of 'peoples', specifically as the 'people of God' composed of Jews and pagans"; that is, its openness to the totality in order to mediate the revelation of Christ [978] . Not to take into account this second aspect would mean to remain at the level of images and symbols -which is obviously part of its own reality as well, because it is what gives it its significance-, and not to go down to its necessary concrete and historical realization. We will then develop here the other two great themes promised at the beginning: (1) how the Church relates to the people of Israel -from which she herself arises- and to the other peoples, whom she is called to summon; (2) and how this people is socially structured in order to fulfill her mediatorial task in Christ.

Relationship with Israel

Balthasar notes that the Church's relationship with Israel raises three difficulties. The first has to do with the Church's claim to universality (which comes from the incarnation of the Word), which raises the question of whether it truly represents a novelty in the face of the universal transcendence that Israel also possessed, since in the call addressed to Abraham there was also a promise that "all nations would be blessed in him and in his descendants" [979] . The second question - more complex - arises from the fact that the Church was born out of the tragedy of the failure of the people of Israel, as such, to accept the message of Jesus. But, at the same time, there were some who did welcome Jesus. In such a way that there is also an

Israel that welcomed the message of Jesus and that, as such, subsists in the Church, so that in the Church the values of Israel remain, but now in a new synthesis. The Fathers of the Church expressed this in the synthetic formula *Novum in Vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet* (= The new was hidden in the old and the old appears in the new) and in other similar ones (e.g. Church since Abel). However, we cannot forget that the Old Testament as such lacks "the cornerstone" (Eph 2:20), which is Jesus. All this has meant two things: (1) that there is an essential difference between Israel and the Church in the fact that belonging to the Church is due to a free personal decision of each individual, and not to an ethnic reason. And (2) that the rupture that gave rise to the Church implies that Israel "refuses to cross the threshold towards which its paths, from the Christian perspective, lead inwardly"; and it further supposes that those paths - as well as the *rest* that take that step - transcend themselves and enter into a new synthesis upon passing that threshold [980] . And the third question derives from the above. For Christian theology, the relationship between Old and New Testament will always remain "a dialectical relationship", since "it cannot be ascribed to a simple 'identity' of the people of God and the history of revelation" -since Christ is not just another moment in the total process-; but neither can the Old and New Covenant be opposed (in the manner of Marcion) [981] . So, faced with the question of whether it is possible to overcome this dialectic, theology has attempted various answers - such as, for example, to await the conversion of all Israel, either intrahistorically or as an eschatological event - and, although the answers have been very different, they at least coincide on one point: attributing "to the existence of Israel in post-Christian times a recognizable role within Christian revelation and theology, and moreover [...] a permanent role for this time of the world" (982) .

2. These three questions or difficulties just mentioned make it necessary to reflect more deeply on the theological structure of Israel and its place and mission within the history of salvation, so that, from there, the place and role of the Church in that history can be better clarified. Balthasar does this on the basis of three theological concepts proper to Israel: their election, the pedagogy God uses with them, and the fact of their survival after the birth of the Church.

The election of Israel was a free and gratuitous act on the part of God, and was framed within an earlier and more universal covenant: the covenant with all humanity, realized through Noah. This understanding of Israel's election already gives us two initial elements, which show the dialectical reality inscribed in the very structure of Israel: first, that Israel - as a chosen people - is a theological reality and only exists theologically; but at the same time, its theological existence is always realized from its material corporeality, as a people. Secondly, the (particular) election of Israel is linked to its transcendence and openness to all

humanity (all peoples will be blessed in Abraham [Gen 12:1-3]). Consequently, "the ethnic moment appears indissolubly united, already from Abraham, with the free grace of the promise, in such a way that this, without remaining anchored in the broad framework of the carnal descent, is on the other hand constantly and freely referring to the ethnic factor". Now, with regard to the remnant of Israel that is incorporated into the Church, this remnant undoubtedly crosses "an eschatological threshold" that "brings about a qualitative transformation" [983] , but which nevertheless continues to look towards "all Israel [who] will be saved" (Rom 11:26). Therefore, "the structure of the Church maintains an essential relationship with the first election of Israel" [984] . And, on the other hand, the promise made to Abraham, in reality looked towards Christ -his descendants-, in such a way that in Christ Israel transcends itself. In conclusion, with respect to the election of Israel, the ethnic moment flows into the eschatological body of Christ and thus loses its earthly importance. Thus, Israel's contribution to the Church can subsist only in a kind of fulfillment in the Church, even though in historical Israel the promise of God and the presence of the Spirit are still preserved. This is the dialectic that accompanies Israel internally and is also present in the other two theological concepts that now follow.

3. Alongside election, which is archetypal for the whole history of Israel, we also find law and prophecy, "intertwined one in the other without separation. Already from the beginning, Abraham's faith - which was obedience - meant being willing to live as "law" every possible commandment of God; and since this choice looked towards an unfathomable future, it also constituted him a prophet [985] . For this reason, later the people, together with the election, also received a law, through which this commandment was transformed into an itinerary of education and light for their path (which was under a promise). And it was this awareness of election and of being in a special relationship with God that constituted the ontic foundation of their existence as a people, which, together with the law as path and goal, became the central dogma of Israel. But therein also lay its danger. This consisted in the fact that, instead of walking in simple obedience to the law, the people affirmed themselves in the awareness of their election and in the possession of the law, in such a way that obedience was transformed into a literal fulfillment of the law to the point of making it a "righteousness of works" (Rom 4:1-3). With this, Israel placed its origin and purpose in itself (in its own fulfillment) and no longer in God. And this would also bring, as an important consequence, the difficulty of being able to reconcile its own conscience of election with the universality of its mission to the world, which gave rise to a proselytism that gradually characterized it. However, in spite of all this, there always remained the call and the possibility of turning to a poverty of heart, which would allow God to write the law in their hearts (Jer 31:31-34); for which the

sufferings and humiliations long endured by the people could be a good opportunity for reflection. Finally, with the arrival of Jesus and his announcement of the reign of God, there is both a continuity - from the moment in which the whole history of Israel looks towards Christ - and also a discontinuity, in which the carnal element must be fulfilled in the spiritual element of the Gospel. Hence, in the face of the Messiah, one can no longer appeal to the great gifts received as the people of God (for an eventual rejection of Jesus), since those gifts had been given only in view of Christ. "The people who have recognized themselves as 'God's *people*' must see the meaning of their election in being '*God's* people', in placing themselves totally at God's disposal, in order to receive their final consummation from him alone and according to his plans" (986) .

4. Finally, "the fact and the way in which Israel survives after Christ and exists historically alongside the Church remains a mystery that cannot be elucidated, but can only be approached from different fronts without the lines meeting in the center". Three approaches are possible to try to understand the survival of Israel after Christ. The first approach means recognizing that the essence of "Israel is indefinable" and hardly expressible [987] . And in order to understand something of its essence, we can distinguish in Israel a formal and a material moment. From a formal perspective, Israel is, above all, its *mystery of election,* which can only be definitively illuminated from a Christian perspective, to which the election was - mysteriously and occultly - ordered. On the other hand, from a material perspective, that same election - in post-Christian times - is what keeps Israel in existence, even in the midst of all the historical vicissitudes through which it has had to pass; but now on the way to the eschaton.

> This moment can be described as an entelechy, in any case intramundane, linked to an ethno-transpersonal principle and inseparable from it, which in the course of history tends toward the future of a fullness (messianism), in which a transcendence of history *(kata pneuma)* [= according to the spirit] must take place without abandoning worldliness *(kata sarka)* [= according to the flesh], something unimaginable which, for this reason, must appear in the framework of history as a utopia, whereas the unity of both things *(pneuma* and *sarx)* [= spirit and flesh] has always been inscribed in the entelechy of Israel [988] .

Election-which means blessing and mission-holds Israel in existence in a way that implies a tension between what it is and what it is called to be; a tension that is twofold, if thought of in relation to Jesus or if thought of in relation to the intrahistorical future.

The second approach is to recognize the permanent tendency of Israel to return to its origin and from there to remake itself, since fidelity to those origins always assures it the way. However, this tendency also has two dangers: (1) the possibility of permanent new "re-readings" of the origin, according to the new circumstances, which always raises the question

of the true fidelity to that origin. And, (2) from the special relationship that the people recognize to have with their God, to draw the conclusion that God really needs the people, just as the people need God. The people would have been chosen out of an internal need for God (display of him, worldly glory, etc.).

And the third approach is born of a gaze "which is launched prophetically forward in the direction of the end", but in such a way that it is completely disconnected from any gaze towards the origin (and thus disconnects itself from the constant presence of God in the midst of the People); and thus Israel is transformed into a utopian project that can have various types of existence (sociological and political) [(989)] .

In these three possible (and valid) approaches, it appears as evident that Israel is inseparable from "the messianic claim and, therefore, universal"; which in post-Christian times produces a contradiction in Israel itself, since the universal promise made to Israel could only be fulfilled in Christ, which implied that Israel had to overcome itself. And it is also shown that for the Church the existence of Israel cannot be indifferent, since "there is but one people composed of the synagogue and the Church. But in order to determine the relationship of the two 'parts'" we must consider that "the rupture between the 'parts' lies in the yes and no to that which, for the Christian Church, is ultimately decisive and foundational, and which Israel refuses to recognize as its fulfillment": Jesus [990] . And, above all, the ineliminable and internal link between Israel and the Christian Church has been made clear, but, at the same time, the dialectic inherent both to the mutual relationship and to the very structure of Israel after the incarnation of the Word is shown in all its crudeness.

5. Before continuing, it is necessary to remember that everything said here about Israel and its relationship with the Church is elaborated from an explicitly Christian perspective, which does not necessarily have to coincide with other views -particularly with Israel's own self-understanding. This, which is precisely what Balthasar is trying to do here, he himself has expressly recognized, when he affirms that this is "Christian theology, which is the only one we cultivate here" [991] . On the other hand, this is perfectly valid, although of course susceptible to criticism - such as those we have already mentioned in the first and fourth chapters - above all, that he minimizes the Old Testament by not granting it value in itself, since he reads it only insofar as it is oriented towards Christ. S. Lösel , for example, states that "Balthasar reduces God's long salvific history with God's people to a mere preparatory role, perceiving Israel's history as significant only in terms of preparation for the incarnation" [992] . It seems to me that this is indeed a weakness in such an approach, because the people of Israel - in their history and in their present - clearly lose consistency as such, both in terms of understanding their identity and their existential project. But, on the other hand, Balthasar is

working from an explicitly Christian theological perspective, and reflecting specifically on the Church and its relationship with Israel. In this sense, his reflection is expressly and voluntarily *unilateral,* due to the purpose of the text. For this reason itself, all this understanding of Israel must be understood as being carried out from an exclusively theological perspective -which is in fact Balthasar's intention-, leaving open as completely valid and complementary many other possible and necessary approaches to the socio-historical reality of Israel. In a way, the relationship between salvation history and "normal" history applies here. They are not two different histories, but different perspectives for looking at the same reality and history.

Other nations

Having carefully explained the dialectical relationship of the Church with Israel, Balthasar then reflects on the Church's relationship with all other peoples, that is, its relationship with the world. In his quest to better understand the role of the Church - as a people in the midst of peoples - he asks about the meaning of other peoples and their religion in relation to the Church. And then also about the mission of the Church in relation to the world.

For Balthasar -this is his basic position-, there is a fundamental difference between Israel and the rest of the peoples of the world; since "the Gentile nations" cannot be considered "theological personages" in the proper sense -beyond personal individualities-, as is the case with Israel. But, nevertheless, as peoples, they are equally under a universal salvific design in Christ -from creation-, since every spiritual creature "has been created immediately for the vocation to the gratuitous vision of God" [993] and, in the event of the encounter with the proclamation of Christ, will be able to recognize in that *man* his deepest religious searches.

> The difference between "Jews" and "pagans" becomes obvious here, since Israel has always been the people of God destined to reach its consummation in the Church, while the "nations," although they are clearly under a general (supernatural) providence, do not possess in their uniqueness, before the call derived from Christ, any mission or theological personality, and even after this call they cannot acquire such a mission and personality anywhere else outside the unity of the Church. There are no national messianisms of theological scope [(994)] .

The reflection will progress in four steps.

1. *Under the universal salvific design in Christ.* In the text just cited, Balthasar maintains that the peoples of the earth should not be looked at - *theologically* - either individually or from each of their particularities, but rather they should be understood as forming a single community in which divine Providence has witnessed in many different ways its universal salvific will, always starting from the salvific plan already inscribed in creation itself (Eph 1:3-14; Col 1:15-20). This is what has been biblically called "the times of God's patience,"

which, although at an initial moment in the Old Testament could have meant a momentary suspension of the deserved punishment, in the New Testament, particularly in Paul, is now shown as the plan of God-in Christ-who does not want the sinner to die, but to be converted and to live. Thus God's justice has been revealed, which from now on looks upon the whole earth as a unity without differences. This is the new meaning of the concept of "longsuffering" or "patience of God", which shows that everything is under a single "economy in anticipation of a certain historical event: the appearance of Jesus Christ" [995] . Everything must be judged and understood from Christ and from his universal creational-salvific design.

A gratuitous and universal vocation. Now, "in a world order in which God wills the salvation of all men, there is no room for a '*purely* natural' event both in the objective offer of salvation by God and in the subjective realization of salvation by man"; so that in all the peoples and persons of the world "one must always reckon with a supernatural modification of man's spiritual nature which already has a natural capacity to transcend itself to the absolute" [996] . This means that in the so-called "pagan" peoples - that is, in every spiritual being - there is the fundamental anthropological *paradox* that all their members, in fact, possess a final vocation in Christ - which is disproportionate to their own nature (in the sense that it is a much greater dignity than that of their nature); and this paradox means, moreover, that the human being comes "to know his own being (the aspiration to possess the living God) only at the moment when the plenifying word and the light of God penetrate this being" [997] . Otherwise, the human being could only feel his loneliness and the sensation of being an empty space. The real human paradox, then, is precisely that nature has been created with a view to this call - therefore unattainable in itself - but, at the same time, this vocation is promised and has always been offered in various ways (de Lubac) [998] . This vocation embraces all reality and radiates from its center - which is Christ - through all times. Therefore, in every religion there are many traces of the man who seeks God, "but these traces are not identical with the objective religious systems", but are only pointers towards the ultimate center. If each of these traces were willed by God within his (religious) system and as a system, we would enter into an insurmountable contradiction, since God's salvific plan would lack a true visible unity. One can only "speak of a (hidden!) history of the *Ecclesia ab Abel,* but its sides and dimensions traverse through religions, which henceforth can no longer be designated as 'ways of salvation' for peoples" [999] , even though each of its contributions and aspects retain their significance and deserve the full attention of the Church [(1000)] .

3. *In Jesus every search finds its unity.* Israel, through its history of salvation, was prepared for the coming of Christ. The other peoples, for their part, have compensated for this lack of preparation by the very coming of Jesus, since he "in his human form shows adequately

present the 'divine' that the pagans were looking for and which they could only objectify inadequately in their religious forms"; and also because Jesus himself - with his way of being - embodies the pedagogy of the Old Testament, saying "I am the way" (Jn 14:6) [1001] . In this way, starting from the missionary mandate -which implies entering into all cultures-, the Church will certainly assume all that is positive, good and true in all religions, but integration will take place only from Christian universality, and not as an implicit knowledge that becomes explicit, since Christian universality is not a synthesis of dispersed elements, but a unity that descends from above and surpasses everything expected and previously seen [1002] . All of the above has been and is taken by Christ to a higher and new level.

> It is clear that for every theological aspect of the definitive word of God its anthropological *suppositum* [= supposition] can be found, to the extent that all the fragments of truth in pagan religions (even atheistic worldviews) can refer to a human and plausible starting point; but it will never be possible, by means of the sum of elements - even supposing that man could by himself exclude all the shadows and deformations introduced by culpable carelessness - to construct that indivisible *unity* which is the incarnate Word, "full of grace and truth". The leap from the sum to the unity, which is identified with the scandal of Jesus' claim to absoluteness and with his urgency to the act of conversion, cannot be neglected by any theology of mission (1003) .

Here he offers his understanding of peoples and religions - as constituted peoples and religions - in their relationship with the Word made flesh. It seems to him - and he has just explicitly said so - that it is a contradiction in itself to propose that every religious objectification - the product of human quests - since they all belong to the essence of the human spirit, are for that very reason in their social, structured and concrete forms also "willed" by God in those delimited forms; and in that way the biblical revelation would only be the culmination of a kind of general revelation [1004] . For Balthasar, on the other hand, if such objectifications of an "aprioristic-transcendental word" were to be given, they would have no way of obtaining a guarantee of being *in conformity* with the true word of God (by what criterion of discernment?). This also does not correspond to the biblical perspective [1005] . Likewise, in accordance with what he has already stated here and on other occasions, he thinks that "a 'supernatural existential'" "is superfluous", since the human being, being the image of God, when he turns to himself, already meets his "prototype"; "although only a light of divine grace is capable of elevating the implicit of this reflection to the field of clear consciousness" [1006] . Here, obviously, he manifests one of his most patent differences with K. Rahner (1007) .

4. *The double movement of the Church towards the world.* With all that has been said, it is even clearer that the Church has a mission towards the world. It has a double task, although they

are not easily distinguishable: "to go out to the peoples and teach them the Christian truth in such a way that they can understand and accept it"; and "not to let the truth be fragmented by its plurality, but to include it in its own unity" [1008] . It is the double movement of inculturation and of contribution to the cultures (or "baptism" of them). We all know that the encounter between Gospel and culture is not easy, but it is always possible to find elements that serve as starting points for a dialogue, even if after that, a process of conversion is still necessary. Thomas says that "the ecclesial mission can be connected both with the natural law present in all people" and with a *gratia fidei* [= grace of faith], which can be presupposed in all peoples as "given interiorly to those who believe explicitly or implicitly and therefore belong to the New Testament". Thus, the mission can both transfer to the Christian field what is already possessed by natural law, and also make explicit those implicitly Christian elements that are found outside the Church [1009] . In this way, Christian proclamation can "begin with some form of 'ascending Christology'" (in the manner of Rahner or others), "but one must be aware that, in itself, it can never become a 'descending Christology', nor can it be joined with it in a harmonious system" [1010] . The most fundamental reason is always Christological: the act of faith and the decision for Christ will always be an unrenounceable *leap*, which means leaving everything and then recovering everything in a new synthesis from Christ. The encounter with Christ is never the end of a human process, but always an unmerited and surprising grace of God, who comes to meet human beings and makes them take a new leap in faith.

But the Church's mission in the world also possesses an internal dramatic tension, since the Church is not only part of the world-and therefore influenced by it-but is also co-responsible for the world on the basis of the mission she received from Christ. Indeed, it is not enough for her to preach the message of salvation, but -even more than that- she must *inculturate* the Gospel in it. Thus, culture must be critically assumed - as well as adapted and transformed - but in such a way that it is a free, respectful and lovingly accepted encounter. However, as is easy to foresee, this presents major difficulties for both sides. On the one hand, each culture possesses - to a certain extent - a form of its own that is already finished, and in that sense already insurmountable (as would be the case with a work of art, which it is not necessary to "improve"). But, on the other hand, Christianity necessarily opens (= breaks) (particular) cultures in the direction of the universal, because it presents the supernatural (definitive) and the global (complete). And since this is always painful, there is often the risk of attempting an armistice between culture and Gospel, a sort of adaptation that does not fulfill its mission of proclamation; therefore, the Church always oscillates between the extremes of delivering a preaching that is only external (it does not inculturate) or of dissolving itself in culture (it

does not "open" it). Its challenge, then, is to enter into culture *without* dissolving into it. This has been the great challenge since the beginning of the Church's journey. And in this task, the criterion has always been evangelical: the proclamation can be rejected and begin with few and, as a general rule, the fruit will always come after death (1011) .

Finally, the Church will always be a small flock, a Church of the few and the poor. It also knows itself to be a community of sinners, which must accept to remain "mixed" (= righteous and sinners) until the end of time. And it recognizes that the kingdom of God does not coincide with the visible structures of the Church, because the Holy Spirit is not bound to ecclesial structures. Indeed, there are members of the Holy Spirit outside the Church (who do not even wish to belong to it) and enemies of the Holy Spirit within the Church (almost always invisible). Although the relationship between the one and the other cannot be calculated, nor can it be accurately perceived, nor is it governed by sociological laws. But the conviction that will always accompany the Church is that the Holy Spirit will perpetually animate her action and that the enlightening and strengthening work of the Spirit - which is always incalculable - is so sure and under such a divine promise , that the ecclesial institution, not even with all its weight and sin, can never prevent the Holy Spirit from acting with all its freedom and strength. For this very reason, none of its infidelities or sins entitles its members to attempt a kind of "spiritual Church" or to undervalue the mediatorial character of the institution (1012) .

A people with a mediating structure

1. *Its structure is born of Christ.* In *Gloria* I, Balthasar affirms that the "decisive question" with regard to the Church is that she "can and claims to be the mediator of the form of God's revelation in Christ [...], a relative form that refers to the capital form of revelation" [1013] . In fact, this people in the midst of peoples, with its response to the word addressed to it by Christ, is incorporated into Christ himself and his own mission. The Church is not the result of a brilliant human action, but is the fruit of "Christ's very being" as his body and bride, according to what we have already explained. She springs from Christ's most personal and intimate reality, from his pierced heart on the cross. "From this it follows that the Church cannot attribute to herself any form of her own, even if she is distinguished from Christ," "because the Church has a 'personality' and a 'nature' received from Christ, whose 'fullness' is insofar as Christ pours his own fullness upon her and *insofar as* they are one (Eph 1:23)." This means that the Church, in all her most fundamental structures, comes from Christ; but at the same time, that "the building up of this body", starting from the different ministries, services and vocations of each one, is a "dynamic process" [1014] which is carried out by the Spirit and which will conclude "when the form of Christ, archetypically completed in him as head, is

perfectly embodied in the body" (1015) .

In other words, this means that Christ will gradually imprint his form - finished and risen - on the form of the Church, which is always in the process of becoming. The Church, starting from her basic structures, is in a permanent configuration with Christ, so that her incorporation into him may be ever fuller and her identification with his mission ever more fruitful. This implies, moreover, that "the institutional dimension of the Church is not absolute and, therefore, is not comprehensible by itself". All the Church's institutionality exists as an instrument for what is her true purpose: her love for God and for the world. But even this love is relative and therefore cannot be taken as an absolute, in the sense that it is not yet perfect and must therefore also be subjected to constant criticism. It is a love "that is on the way to an eschatological form" which is the only definitive one (1016) .

From all this, Balthasar draws an important conclusion:

> This self-understanding of the Church requires it to understand itself in an even deeper way, that is, as a *medium,* as a system of relationships, which can only be understood in its form when it succeeds in bringing together in a plausible way the greatnesses that are to be mediated and assembled through the *medium* (1017) .

The Church is the mediation of Christ for the world. In this way, the real identity of her form is precisely that of being mediation, that is, she is (and achieves) her (authentic) form when she mediates between God and the creature. Although the Church is evidently not Christ, she nevertheless seeks for herself and for the world to be *conformed* to the figure of Christ and tries to have the figure of Christ constantly imprinted on her, in such a way that her whole institutionality is at the service of that con-formation with Christ. And only in this way - insofar as it is incorporated into Christ and tries to conform itself to him - "is the Church to mediate between God and the world, just like Christ, whose form she bears" 1018 . This implies that the Church will be credible in the world to the extent that her figure is transparent to that of Christ and she herself can also be a transfer from the world to God. In this way all its contingent and historical elements must constantly depose their contingent character in order to be gradually transformed into a plausible expression of God.

2. *Unification in the mystery of Christ.* Although it is impossible to give a univocal definition of the Church, nevertheless - according to Eph. 3 - the Church can be defined as a *mystery* of unity because she "at the same time completes and disintegrates Israel from within," since she incorporates all peoples, thus constituting a people of many peoples, where all have the same rights (this is what Rom. 11:17 explains as having been "grafted into the cultivated olive tree"). Now, this mystery of unification-impossible from the human reality-is the exclusive work of God, in Christ and in the Spirit, since "neither Israel nor much less the 'nations' were

capable of crossing the threshold of consummation by themselves" (1019) .

Indeed, the Word of God, by becoming flesh, lowered himself to the human level and became close to all human beings, in such a way that now all the peoples of the earth can recognize in Christ the humanity that they themselves possess. But also, at the same time, they can discover in the man Jesus the revelation of the original and full model of humanity toward which every human being has always aspired. However, the incarnation also has its moment of scandal, since Jesus is a particular being, and the Church that he leaves behind is also - in the end - a particular institution, despite its universal vocation. Therefore, the mystery of the universal vocation to belong to Christ is understood only from the resurrection of Jesus, when the Risen One has already become the Head of the Church and the fullness of all, embracing and incorporating all humanity as his own body. Thus the Church acquired her deepest mystical truth-as the body and spouse of Christ, which arose precisely from the Incarnation and the Cross-only as a prolongation of the *mystery* of Christ. In this way, the Church was constituted in her most authentic reality, and made truly Catholic, only after Easter, and this is precisely what the foundation of the Church by the earthly Jesus pointed to. But without forgetting that, in the risen body of Christ, along with the grafting of the Church, all peoples have also been grafted, thus eliminating all differences among men. "On this paradox of a community built on its particular body, but universalized as such, and nourished by this life-giving body, is based Catholic ecclesiology with its tensions" 1020 . Here are some of its tensions:

> 1. The uniqueness of the *Catholica,* which, however, is realized only in each of the particular local churches; 2. this unity as a gift of the *Pneuma* and, in spite of everything or precisely for this reason, as a visible-tangible unity of both the community of life and the institution; 3. hierarchical organization which does not prevent the participation of all in ecclesial life; 4. a sense of living tradition with a constant simultaneous reference to Sacred Scripture; 5. Sacramental and liturgical practice that in no way excludes personal piety; 6. unity of a clearly defined faith in the free diversity of its forms of expression and its systematizations; finally 7. certainty of the grace of election, by which the Church is distinguished from the world, but linked to a tireless missionary movement in the world, for which salvation is fully intended (1021) .

Here we see how Christological (institutional) realities concretely and gradually build up the Church, since every vocation in the Church not only grants the character of "person" to each of its members, but also socializes them, incorporating them into Christ. In this way, the Church is that interpersonal community that is always *becoming in* order to become fully *one* in Christ.

Sacrament. If the Church is constituted on the basis of faith in Christ for a mission to be fulfilled in the world "through Christ, with him and in him" (Eucharistic liturgy), then "the

Church never exists in itself, but always in persons who must receive their ecclesiality from the Church (in each of the sacraments) and ratify it in freedom" [1022] . This means that the Church - as such, in her members - receives and ratifies herself always and only from Christ. This is her condition as a *sacrament.* Balthasar affirms:

> Since the space within which the salvation of Christ is realized is essentially the world as a whole, the Church forms here a concept of mediation, insofar as, as a concrete partner of Christ, she has a visible and delimited figure, but where her position of partner is realized through a particular influence of the author of salvation (she is not "Bride" other than by being "Body"); and this, however, with the clear intention of acquiring, in union with Christ, a function of dispenser of salvation for the whole world [(1023)] .

The Church, as the body and spouse of Christ - as his concrete partner - and composed of human members - who belong to and are in the world - by her mediatorial action - proper to her mission - becomes the sacrament of Christ for the world. Thus, its (instrumental) presence is efficacious for the transmission of the salvation that Christ has brought about by his death and resurrection. Indeed, "the Church is objectively established ('founded') by the preparatory actions of the earthly Jesus and by the self-foundation in the cross-Eucharist, so objectively that, above all hesitation in ratification, her invincible condition is guaranteed (Mt 16:18)". This means that the Church at all times and in all circumstances is constituted by the self-giving of Jesus and by the acceptance of this self-giving (in the manner of an existential ratification in each of its members). "In this constitution, the Church is original sacrament, she infallibly receives her own being from Christ's being (*'ex opere operato'*), but in such a way that she ratifies this reception as a subject (*'ex opere operantis')* and thus realizes herself" [1024] . But since both aspects are inseparable, there will always be a tension between the infallibility that has been promised to it and the fallibilities that are proper to its created reality, which implies that its structure will always be precarious, although without ever losing its condition as an efficacious sacrament.

This is so because the Church - although it is "a single objective reality" - always exists only in concrete and individual persons "who, as such, can enter into this form of unity and life only if they submit to the objective law of life and receive it from the pre-existing ecclesial community". There they welcome the self-realization of Christ the Sacrament, "which applies to them as individuals, which refers to them and claims their consent" [1025] . Thus, each of these actions-which we call sacraments-conveys "Christ's self-giving to the Church, in order to integrate the individual into the Church's mission and to be with Christ 'light of the world.'" The Church, then, while having authority over the sacraments, at the same time needs them and is the recipient of them [1026] . Through her overall sacramental structure, she teaches the Word as magisterium and, as Word made flesh, she gives it in the Eucharistic sacrifice. In this

way it becomes clear that the Church's actions always depend on Christ and constantly refer back to him. Moreover, they accompany all the existential moments of human beings, which makes her a sacrament for the world, since she collaborates in the salvation of the whole world, making the life of every Christian bear fruit in this sense. Each Christian is part of the total sacrament-the Church-which, at the same time, is an extension of Christ, the true fundamental sacrament.

4. *Transcendence towards the world.* Her sacramental condition also causes the Church to transcend "herself in order to humanity as a whole" [1027] . In the same way that in Jesus person and mission are identified-something that is also fulfilled analogously in every human being-the essence and mission of the Church form but one single thing, that is, the mission is not something added to the Church, but a constitutive element of her identity. The Church's transcendence - or outward mission - is born of the Church's own immanent structure, insofar as she is incorporated into Christ, who gave himself for the world and then sent the Holy Spirit to carry out the fullness of his work. However, it is necessary to repeat once again that none of this overlooks the dramatic nature of the Church's mission, which is based on the permanent tension between Gospel and culture, between message and free acceptance, between witness and sin. And all this stems from the fact that the just and sinners live together in it, in such a way that, although its final indefectibility is promised, the presence of sin will always cloud its figure. This is the precariousness inherent in being a human and institutionally organized community; and precisely for this reason, at the end of time, the institutional will fade away to make room only for the living sacrament that is Christ.

5. *Institutional forms.* In *Gloria* I, as he will do later in *Theology* III, Balthasar exposes the meaning of the institutional forms of the Church and its relationship with Christ and the Spirit. These are familiar themes and we will not repeat them here. But in our context, it will be illustrative to at least enumerate them. In *Gloria* I he shows how these institutional forms must always be traced back to Christ, their origin [1028] ; while in *Theologica* III he explains how they are the work of the Holy Spirit [1029] . It is then about the joint action of "the two hands of the Father" (Irenaeus) in the sacramentality of the Church. Let us recall them. *The Eucharistic worship* , as a memory of the Lord's passion, is also a memory of the origin of the Church. Therefore, its celebration is a permanent birth of the Church, insofar as it is an encounter between the fundamental action of Christ and the secondary action of the Church, which makes present this same redeeming Christ. *The sacramental form* is under the fundamental law that every socio-ecclesial creation must be in reference to and under the form of Christ - the original sacrament - who died and rose for us. Thus, the sacraments - as an essential part of ecclesial life - whose "matter" is man himself in his various existential

circumstances, must con-form that same "matter" in a particular way to Christ. Therefore, the sacraments are falsified if they are attributed a meaning independent of their reference to communion with the Risen One. *Faith and dogma* also have their own form, which must also be credible. The proclamation, which must always be good news, requires faith - which could extend to dogma - but not faith in the preachers, but only in God, since the Church is only the mediator of faith. Therefore, "to the extent and *only* to the extent that Christ lives in her as a global sacrament", she can be "co-object" of faith [1030] . *Preaching* imprints the form of Christ only if it was already imprinted "in the existential faith of the preacher" [1031] . There are also *other ecclesial forms*, which, each in its own way, must also possess the form of Christ. The priestly ministry "is intelligible only if the following of Christ and the constitution in the ministry are contemplated as a unique figure that guarantees the representation of Christ" [1032] . Ecclesiastical law must be based on the Christian's free will to belong to the Church. Finally, the evangelical counsels and theology only make sense if they are means to conform oneself to Christ. This is the true meaning and the authentic sense of institutional ecclesial forms.

IX. Eschatology from the Christological hope

In chapter four, when we referred to Christ as the eschatological center of history, we said something about Balthasar's understanding of the last things [1033] . Now it is time to present in a deeper and more complete way the most relevant aspects of Balthasar's eschatology, which is one of the topics in which he offers the most novelties and, at the same time, which has aroused the greatest controversy [1034] . Moreover, this is one of those arguments where we can see more explicitly the influence of Adrienne von Speyr , particularly in his understanding of the "end", since - as we had occasion to mention - *Theodramatica* V has been written with frequent quotations from Adrienne, which testify to the "basic coincidence" of both around these themes [1035] . Indeed, the last volume of his *Theodramatica* is devoted entirely to the "last act," that is, to the last events or *novissima.* However, precisely because it is a volume dedicated to eschatology, he maintains that it is a distinctly "Trinitarian"volume [1036] , since the history of God with man (= Theo-dramática) must necessarily lead to "the mystery of God". However, in order to properly understand this volume, two things must be kept in mind: (1) Describing the final events cannot be anything other than speaking of God's final *embrace* of humanity and, therefore, everything that is said will only be "a stammering and stupefied circling and circling around the mystery based on certain words and illuminating indications of Scripture". (2) A theology of ultimate things can be based only "on the articles of faith (and not vice versa)," particularly, on the Trinity and the missions of the Son and the Spirit. From this, then, Balthasar will try to "go as far as revelation allows," aware that he will often be thinking things to their limit [1037] . This is his great contribution and may also be his possible limitation.

In any case, as in other themes of the *Trilogy,* Balthasar does not intend here to produce a kind of eschatology manual, but simply to highlight the most fundamental aspects for understanding the mystery of God and the human vocation and, specifically - in this volume - he wants to "think" about the final moment of history. For our part, in this chapter we only want to highlight the most characteristic contributions that Balthasar has made in this area. We will do so on the basis of four main arguments. First, we will present Balthasar's (own) understanding of eschatology as Christological eschatology. Then, three problems that eschatology must further deepen, in order to better address some of the questions raised by eschatological statements. Thirdly, we will offer its characteristic look at the eschaton -from the Trinity-, but under the double perspective of what an eventual eternal damnation really

means and of Christian hope; which to a certain extent question the "traditional" image of hell. And, finally, the need to understand -knowing that it is an unfathomable mystery- our future, absolute life in God, as a participation in the Trinitarian event, .

Concept of Christian eschatology

For Balthasar, as in general for contemporary thought, eschatology must always be understood as a "Christological eschatology" [1038] , that is, Christ is the hermeneutical criterion of the last things or esjaton, and therefore these must be understood and interpreted from the message of Jesus and the event of his resurrection [1039] . In this Christological accentuation, Balthasar unifies three elements -which theology has not always properly related-, and then -this is what determines his most novel element-, he tries to rethink and understand in a new way those same "last things", starting from this Christological and unified way of understanding eschatology. The three related elements are, in the first place, what "traditional dogmatics has already developed at length", that is, "'the last things': resurrection, judgment, with purgatory, eternal salvation or reprobation". To this he has joined - secondly - from the most recent exegesis ("since the works of Johannes Weiss and his followers"), an understanding of eschatology that refers rather to the global situation of the *present* world in the context of the New Testament events [1040] . Concretely, as he indicated in speaking of the "hour" of Jesus [1041] , in the New Testament the unity between two poles is gradually being better and better articulated: on the one hand, "the choice of the disciples to follow" Jesus, which implied accompanying Jesus towards his "hour", which is nothing other than the irruption of the esjaton of God in history, which took place with his death and resurrection. And, on the other hand, the paschal experience, which makes the disciples participate in the Spirit of the Risen One, who in turn introduces them to this paschal event. Thus, these two moments necessarily involve and belong to each other. That is to say, the following of Jesus "towards the eschaton" "and the certainty in the Holy Spirit of already living now in the salvation won by Jesus" [1042] form a unity of such category and novelty that the expectation can no longer be only of the future, because "the presence of the Risen One and of his Spirit" make that future a reality already present [1043] . This is what Paul wanted to indicate with the expression "existence *in Christōi*"; John did so with the characteristic "abiding" in Jesus; and in the Synoptics it appears as the community "acting in the spirit of discipleship" [1044] . And, thirdly, the Christological element, which means that both the history of the world and its eschatological moment are incorporated in Christ [1045] . This implies that Jesus synthesizes "in himself the time of the world", but also reveals "the over-time of God" [1046] , since God does not live in a "non-time", but in an "over-time proper to him" [1047] ; in such a way that the

eschatological events can no longer be seen in a linear -nor temporal- way, but from the over-time of God; and even implies that the Son, from the "timelessness" of his state on the cross, can give to all sinners of all time "an elevating embrace" (*Unterfassung*) that accepts "in itself the abandonment of the sinners " [1048] . The (joint) reflection of these three theological aspects -which we will have to study in detail a little later- will allow Balthasar to understand in a new way the last things (the *novissima*) or -with his words- *the last act.*

The concept elaborated by Balthasar is deduced from the biblical texts themselves with eschatological content, but understood correctly in their Christological sense. In fact, as we explained in the respective chapter, in showing Christ as the determining center of history, Balthasar recalled that in the New Testament two ways of conceiving eschatology enter into interference; That is, on the one hand, that humanity after the resurrection of Christ is determined by the actual and eschatological presence of Christ - with whom the reign of God has come - even if this *already* includes a *not yet;* and, on the other hand, that in this expectation of the definitive vision there are also elements of the Judeo-apocalyptic expectation. This affirms that, with Christ -and his resurrection-, the end of time has come, so that everyone who lives in Christ lives in the definitive, although also in the expectation of the fullness of that end which has already come to pass. In all truth, then, eschatology is a completely Christological reality and depends in its totality on the event of Christ [1049] . This is what has been called "the 'theology of the present' of John's Gospel", where "the Christ event" [1050] "is the vertical irruption of the consummation of horizontal time" [1051] , absorbing all history in Christ, and making him the eternal judge, in such a way that the future of each person is decided, from now on, according to the attitude taken before the Risen One. And that theology "says nothing basically new in comparison with the Pauline writings and with the rest of the New Testament, but is only a logical clarification" [1052] . As we can see, it is a Christological eschatology that places everything in relation to Christ, and Christ is placed in an over-time that makes him be simultaneously in all the moments of history.

Balthasar confirms this eschatological understanding (which is very important for him, above all, because of the consequences he will draw with respect to the *novissima*) by studying those other biblical passages that seem to go in a different direction, showing that even they reaffirm this Christological notion of eschatology. These are: the apocalyptic discourses of the synoptics, and the theme of the day of the Lord or judgment, which we must now review.

"The synoptic 'little apocalypse' as a piece loaded with many images and Judeo-apocalyptic conceptions" (Mt 24; Mk 13; Lk 17 and 21), contrary to what has often been said [1053] , does not differ fundamentally "from the 'eschatology of the present' of John" [1054] . Indeed, those texts, although they often use apocalyptic language, nevertheless "refer to the direct

repercussion of the presence of Jesus in the world" and, therefore, in those texts the "apocalyptic garb" is reinserted in a new Christological context, having been taken out of "their original Jewish conceptual horizon", with which that synoptic "little apocalypse" does not differ substantially from John's conception. "The statements and, especially, warnings about the historical future attributed to Jesus refer centrally to the fact of his historical being here and having been here." For example, in "the discourse on the fall of the Holy City," "in Jesus' consciousness of sending," the fall is associated "with his own arrival at the end of the perishable historical world" [1055] , so that the tragic elements have been de-apocalypticized "in favor of a Christocentric eschatology." These are facts that indicate that the definitive (what is traditionally understood as the end of the world) has already occurred with Jesus (whose Passover is the end of this aeon). For this very reason, when the disciples want to know the day and hour in which all this will occur, Jesus responds, above all, with teachings that are intimately related to the fact that - with him - the "end" has already arrived (following, witnessing, vigilance, sufferings for his sake), and does not enter into the subject of future dates. "Universal history becomes here, theologically, an interpretation of the consequences of the incarnation of the Word of God, consequences that are presented here as progressive-universal" [1056] . All this "contains in itself the primacy of the 'time' and the 'over-time' of Jesus in the face of all the time of the world" (1057) .

The expectation regarding the "day of the Lord and the judgment" must be understood in the same way. The fact that "Jewish eschatology expects salvation in the future, in an extension of time" [1058] understood as linear, makes understandable the pressure that this conception "of an eschatological day of God's judgment had to exert on the New Testament conceptions" (1059) .

> [But] what in the Jews was the expectation of the "evil time" of the sufferings of the Messiah, in the New Testament is the awareness of living from the death and resurrection of Christ in the "end time" or "at the end of the eons" (Heb 9:26). Within this end time, a qualitative differentiation of the chronological periods is necessary. Only the "crisis", decision and sending, brought by Christ into the world can make its way - visibly or invisibly - into the world (1060) .

Thus, although formally "the Old Testament conception of the universal judgment at the end of time, linked to the resurrection of the dead" is formally maintained, "at the same time the judgment is described not as universal, but as individual of each one", in such a way that -in fact- "the death of the individual and his judgment" coincide [1061] . This is because the whole eschatology is radically thought "from within the Christ event" [1062] , from which all the Judeo-apocalyptic incrustations, and even the underlying anthropological parameters, must be interpreted. There, a linear thinking must be excluded.

From the Christian point of view the end is present, while the Jews continue to expect it in

the future. From a theological point of view, beyond the fact of the Christ event, the only thing possible and to be expected in the history of the world is the interpretation and repercussion of that event, interpretation and repercussion that henceforth become more and more the instance and motive of an intrahistorical drama (1063) .

Consequently, if we already live in the presence of the definitive, then it becomes completely useless - and theologically eradicated - to try to guess or make calculations about a possible date for "the second coming of the Lord," or to try new periodizations for history from now on (in the manner of Joachim of Fiore), because all this would mean thinking that the definitive event has not yet occurred (as the Jewish apocalyptic thought). The actuality of the definitive must make us formulate eschatological themes in a new way [1064] . Above all, "the 'time' of God must be given primacy over the time of the creature, whose future, present and past must be measured and oriented by the divine mode of duration" (1065) .

From all that has been said, Balthasar concludes that, for the human being, the eschatological presence of God -after the resurrection of Christ-, given that God is an "always more" that "comes upon him [= the human being]" [1066] , is a presence of something that has already happened (the paschal mystery) but that, at the same time, is expected (because God is always more), and only in this way is it a permanent presence. This is what is called "Christian hope": waiting for the one who is coming, but because he has already come and is present. This is why it is a hope that "does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5). However, this hope in the one who is to come cannot be understood or interpreted in an anthropological and linear way, as if "Christian hope extends towards a future of the world, but first of all according to divine or, better, Christological time, in which anthropological time is assumed in the divine form of duration". This does not mean that temporal human history disappears, but simply that this same history now takes place *in* Christ and depending *on* Christ. This is the foundation of true Christian hope and, evidently, gives a new meaning to the novium, which must be interpreted also and only from the divine "over-time". Hence Balthasar maintains that "the true 'novissimo' is the Trinitarian life of God manifested in Jesus Christ" [1067] . With these elements, which have allowed us to understand the main coordinates of Balthasar's eschatological thought, we can now enter into the more particular themes of his thought.

Some questions that eschatology has to face in a new way

After exposing the indispensable hermeneutical criteria to adequately understand the eschatological statements, Balthasar dwells on some "aspects of the last act of the drama" [1068] , especially on what it could mean that the final act is transformed into a tragedy, that is, that a part of creation is given over to eternal damnation [1069] . Faced with this, he sees a double

and dialectical problem. First, "the cold impassivity with which [traditional] theology hands over to eternal damnation a part of creation destined for heaven and does not consider this as a loss for the glory of God" [1070] ; and then, a certain "manifest proclivity for the doctrine *of* apokatastasis" [1071] on the part of some current theology, thus not taking "seriously the mysterious 'absoluteness' in the created will and, with it, its possibility of resisting God" [1072] . To some extent, each of these two opposing positions affirms itself precisely in the fear of falling into the opposite one. If, on the one hand, there is a fear of *apocatastasis*, on the other hand, there is an icy indifference in the face of the condemnation of others, attributed without startling to *the justice* of God. But all this raises unavoidable questions: can human beings, subjected to so many contingencies and historical determinations, be subjected to a definitive judgment that *eternally* divides them into two opposing parts? Or, does the fact "that Christ died for all men and for all their sins," surpassing with his merits all human evil, "deprive of its force all [biblical] texts that count on the possibility that finite freedom can rebel precisely against a redemptive instance that claims to surpass and embrace it?" [1073] . Even the possible condemnation of human beings, is it not "a defeat of God, who fails in his own work of salvation"? [1074] It seems to Balthasar that these questions - not always assumed with all the necessary depth - deserve and oblige a much deeper and, perhaps, more daring reflection. This is what he tries to do -in *Theodramatics* V- with his eschatological reflections. To illuminate these questions, Balthasar delves into three themes that require further thought: what Scripture really says about the fact of God's judgment; how to understand the diabolical; and what to say about pain in God.

When is (or has been) God's judgment

Paul, the Synoptics and John, although they seem to have a somewhat different understanding among themselves, and, at the same time, within their own understandings we can find different ways of understanding the judgment; nevertheless, they coincide in a fundamental element: the theme of the judgment must be understood from the redemption accomplished by Christ with his cross and resurrection. This, which seems obvious, has not always been so present in our "representations" of the final judgment. Indeed, Paul, whose theology is centered on the power of sin before Christ and its overcoming "by the greater power of the work of God's justification in Jesus Christ" [1075] , sees the judgment of God, both already realized in the justification of the cross, and also in the future, in the triumph of the justified over the powers of sin at the end of time (fruit of that same redemption). But this should not be perceived as a contradiction, because if in the letter to the Romans "judgment is not at the end, but at the beginning, while the fruit of the reconciliation of the world through Christ triumphs at the end" (Romans 5:12-17; 8:32-37; 11:32-37); 8:32-37; 11:32); and in the

1st Letter to the Corinthians "the scene of judgment is no longer at the beginning, but at the end", after the battle that Christians too must fight against the forces of evil (1 Cor 15:54-58) [1076] ; this is simply a sign that the grace of salvation has implicit in it (and is inseparable from) the responsibility for the mission and works of love, since in Romans "Christians [are] justified for the greater hope of salvation" and in 1 Corinthians "maximum demands are made on them" to attain that same salvation [1077] . These are two opposing aspects, but they indicate the same reality: salvation (= judgment) has already taken place in the Passover of Christ, but this also implies possessing a faith transformed into operative love.

As for the Synoptics, it is clear that they use both OT materials as well as Jewish and Jewish apocalyptic ingredients, but they do so by "'formally' transporting these images to the present-coming figure of Jesus" [1078] , so that these same images can no longer be read in a Judeo-apocalyptic way. This new understanding of the manifestation and judgment of God over the world (in the "Day of Yahweh" [Mt 3:7; 13:49-50]) has as its main characteristic the substitution of the judge: now it is Jesus, the Son of man. Moreover, these eschatological discourses of the future are pronounced before the death and resurrection of Christ, thus giving all their apocalyptic eschatological significance to the Passover of Jesus itself (Mt 27:45-53). With all this, the Synoptics are suggesting the actuality of the final judgment and, therefore, indicating that "the future is decided exactly in the present". In this way, the decision before Jesus is identified with the final destiny; because Jesus is also present - today and at all times - in the suffering brother (before whom a decision must be made), thus implying "the immediacy between the historical and eschatological now" [1079] . In synthesis, "the Synoptics think starting from the traditional day of judgment (but which is preceded in the Old Testament by the covenant of grace and in the New Testament by the proclamation of the Kingdom) and look from there to the definitive salvation, which is in the cross and resurrection, and which, in turn, demands acceptance by man (cf. Mk 16:16)" [(1080)] .

In John, the theme of judgment is centered around the idea of "crisis" as "distinction-division", "but in a more paradoxical way than in the Synoptics", since Jesus "was not sent 'to judge the world, but to save it' (Jn 3:17; 12:47)", but at the same time, he "came into the world to open a process" (cf. Jn 9:39) [1081] . This is well understood if we think that, in John, the Word is the light that came into the world to enlighten, and its intention is therefore to enlighten and not to judge (Jn 1:9). However, when it is rejected - it is not believed in - it produces blindness, and that same darkness is "what *forces* the light that comes to become judgment" (cf. Jn 3:19-20). And "that decision for or against the Jesus who is in history is eschatological" (cf. Jn 8:12) [1082] . Now, the light that penetrates the darkness reveals to the darkness itself its lack of love, which provokes hatred for the light - and thus reveals the

infinite love of God - unleashing the struggle between light and darkness, between grace and sin, and the need to decide for or against the light.

In synthesis, both Paul, the Synoptics and John see in the event of the death and resurrection of Christ the definitive judgment of God on the world, although they express it with different language: Paul, from the point of view of justification; the Synoptics, from the traditional Day of Yahweh; and John, from the point of view of the crisis and decision between light and darkness. And all three see that this eschatological judgment is also associated with the present life of the believer, either from a hope and demands for the present life (Paul), or as a decision before Jesus (Synoptics), or as an acceptance of and struggle for the light, in the face of darkness (John). Keeping these elements in mind - especially the "anticipation" of God's *judgment* - will be very important for understanding Balthasar's reflections on the "end" of history.

How to understand the diabolical and its strength

It is impossible to "elucidate the *Mysterium Iniquitatis* [= the mystery of iniquity]," but at least some description of its appearance in the world can be attempted. For example, John refers to the devil as a "murderer" and "liar" (Jn 8:44-45), who hates Jesus (Jn 7:7), although his hatred is without reason.

> With the term hatred, as an open, aggressive opposition to the love that characterizes God in his economic and Trinitarian self-giving (cf. 1 Jn 4:16), we come as close as possible to the center of his mystery. Hatred is first in itself, but then also there where, overflowing, it invades the world of men, who, allowing it to enter and then participating in it, find themselves immersed in the dragging capacity of a power more absolute than perhaps they believe and want (1083) .

Balthasar also maintains that "we must fully agree with Barth's programmatic affirmation that there is not and cannot be a transparent doctrine of the demonic. But what must be affirmed is that "the victory over the devil is God's own affair" and, therefore, the human being can fight and defeat the devil only in Christ and with the weapons of God (Eph 6:10-17) [1084] , in a constant and attentive vigilance. Jesus has accomplished "the expulsion of the devil through the work of reconciliation of the world" (cf. Jn 12:31) [1085] . For this reason, Balthasar also agrees with Barth that "the appointed place where the struggle between God and the devil takes place is not in God himself (for whom the devil is the thing already conquered through reprobation), but is the God-man, Jesus Christ" (1086) .

On the other hand, the devil can assume various figures, such as spiritual or sensual temptation, or threats, etc. One can also observe "a certain relationship of the diabolical with what Paul describes as the cosmic powers" [1087] , that is, to see its action in structural

relationships that oppose God's plan. Even, in Revelation, it is stated that "precisely because the dragon has been cast out of eternity into time and because he is aware of the shortness of the time granted to him, he redoubles his fury during the time after Christ" [1088] . However, he has been vanquished on the cross, and, therefore, he can and must now also be vanquished by Christians, although equally these can only do so from their own cross.

> This justifies - in the midst of the "victory of God", who is naturally "right" as merciful and just - the at least analogous discourse of an eschatological tragedy, insofar as one can or must speak of a partial failure of God's universal plan, of a partial meaninglessness of His creation (1089) .

In short, in spite of the mysteriousness of the diabolical and the force it can exert on the life of human beings, God - as such - has reprobated it, and the incarnate Son has defeated it on the cross. And although in Christ we can and must now overcome this evil reality, there is still a historical struggle ahead of us. Now, this very fact and the possibility of being defeated in this struggle raises the unavoidable question about a possible failure of God in his creative and salvific work - a question that must be answered - and, together with it, the question of whether God can or must be *grieved* by this eventual "failure".

Is pain possible in God?

As a reaction to "a Greek theo-ontology of 'absolute being' and with the turn to a Johannine definition of God as love par excellence", "despite its knowledge of the traditional axiom of the immutability of God", contemporary theology has returned to the theme of the "pain of God" [1090] . Balthasar introduces the topic with a text by G. Martelet -as an example of current questions-, where it is clearly stated that, if we think together with Scripture that God is love, how could he remain intangible, without pain, in the face of sin and in the face of someone's condemnation? [1091] . Then Balthasar reasons:

> The affectability of God, his pain (to the limits of his death) cannot be disqualified as contrary to revelation since the idea of a painful affectability of God can adduce in its favor biblical assertions, especially OT, while the "discourse of the death of God" as a Christological affirmation was current since early patristics and was thematized in the confrontation of the fifth and sixth centuries around the formula: "One of the Trinity has suffered (and died)" (1092) .

All this forces him to think a little more carefully about this topic. As is his custom, he takes a historical tour, reviewing the subject in the Bible, in the Fathers of the Church and in contemporary theology.

In Sacred Scripture we can find pain in God from three aspects. In the old covenant God "suffers" because of the people's unfaithfulness to the covenant sealed with them: thus, God "repented" of having created human beings and "it grieved him to the heart" (Gen 6:6); they

"provoke him to anger" (Ps 78:41), they "grieve his holy spirit" (Is 63:10), etc. There are also the indirect texts, where God "suffers" because of the "abandonment" he has received from his bride, the people (Jer 2-3; Hos 1-3). "This pain of God will have a later history in the rabbinical writings", where, according to the studies of Peter Kuhn [1093] , we "find about 80 passages [in which] God appears weeping, lamenting, suffering with gestures of pain and funeral rites, especially because of the destruction of the first Temple (but also of the second)" [1094] . There it is expressed with great force and clarity the way in which God shows his own pain and the impotence he feels in the face of the hardening of his people. And, in the New Testament, one can well think that Jesus' weeping over Jerusalem and what he says there about God's abandonment of the holy city (Mt 23:37-39), is not *only* an expression of Jesus' human nature, but, as Son, also manifests the authentic *sentiments* of the Father.

With regard to the Fathers, the issue has several aspects. First of all, it is true that they generally assumed "the concept of the divine *apatheia* or *ataraxia* [= impassibility] from Greek philosophy," but they did so in a very precise context, which also determined the meaning of this assumption. Indeed, their aim was to oppose the mythologies of the gods who suffered and "suffered" human afflictions. But also, on the basis of their faith (and precisely for this reason) they also spoke "of the vitality of God, of his freedom to communicate, of his feelings that are externalized in front of man" [1095] . And this implied attributing "to God compassion and mercy, which are behind the human suffering of the Son" [1096] . *Pathos* can be understood as an involuntary external accident", even in the manner of a sin (i.e. a dragging force), which is not possible in God [1097] . In that sense, God is impassible. But this does not mean that God cannot be compassionate through his charity and love, which means being able to speak of patience, repentance and other biblical expressions that clearly express that God allows himself to be *affected* by what happens in humanity. As Origen expressed it : "First he suffered, then he descended", since "it is suffering of love" [1098] . Therefore, we see that the thought of the Fathers grants a certain *pathos* to God, insofar as "he can be affected" from outside, but "only insofar as this responds to a free, active and preceding decision of his will", which is born of love for the creature. For the Fathers his "eternal divine vitality" - which had a certain "analogy with human affections" - was perfectly compatible with his infinite immutability. That is in coherence with Scripture, which "looks through [God's] economic attitude to a property of the divinity itself" [1099] . Unfortunately, the later era tended to conceive of God's immutability much more rigidly than the Fathers and thus saw in the biblical texts only anthropomorphisms, since God could not be *affected* by the creature.

The modern reaction to this post-patristic "impassibility" of God is therefore understandable, even though some ambiguities can also be perceived. Balthasar offers some examples.

Influenced by Hegel - who, from his dialectical philosophy, thinks that God "has to make the experience of dying in order to live as the living divine", as a necessary process and as free self-revelation [1100] -, "the German kenotics of the 19th century" think that the incarnation supposes a self-limitation (or kenosis) of the divine properties of the Son referred to the world and, with it, "something like a death of God in God". The English, in turn, at the end of the 19th century, speak of the fact that God "could not be perfect if he did not suffer under sin, either in his essence, or in the person, especially, of the Father" [1101] . For his part, Jürgen Moltmann "develops the doctrine of the Trinity (understood in the style of Hegel) primarily by starting from the supreme Father-Son *diastasis* on the cross", since the existence of the world presupposes "a free overflow of its goodness" and "the passion of God for the other", who "ultimately [is] the incarnate Son who bears to the cross all the guilt of the world" [1102] . With that, however, the Trinitarian process tends to coincide with the process of the world. On the other hand, Karl Barth , from a more Christological foundation and from a clear theology of the covenant, sees in Christ - the concrete man who was taken to death - the ultimate reason for creation and the foundation of the covenant. In this way, "his death is the testimony of God's extreme fidelity to the covenant, for in that death he bears the infidelity of Israel and of humanity". However, what is decisive for Barth is that, "in suffering, God *acts,* for there he is faithful only to his own decision to carry to the end his freely contracted covenant" [1103] and, in this way, the passion of Christ shows the essence of God: his faithfulness and his superiority. And from there one could even deduce that "the prerequisite for [the] acceptance of the incarnation and the cross" is "the intradivine form of the obedience of the Son" [1104] . Finally, Balthasar quotes Jean Galot who, in his book *Does God Suffer ?*[1105] , approaches the subject "against a long tradition of the *apatheia* of God", thus doing justice to Sacred Scripture, where the whole Trinity is involved in the *kenosis* of the Son: the Father offers his Son, whom he gives, and the Son accepts that sacrifice; which is showing a true *pain* and "tangibility of God for the sin and suffering of the world" (1106) .

> That is why [Galot] distinguishes between the necessary Trinitarian life of God, which no pain can reach, and the free decision of the divine persons out of pure love to create a world from which pain can affect those persons. Secondly, the mysterious suffering of the divine persons is more than a metaphor [...] There is a genuine analogy between worldly and divine suffering, but so that divine suffering as a *modus* of the supreme love in God must be understood as belonging to his pure perfection, and so that this (real!) suffering has room within the omnipresent divine joy (1107) .

However, Balthasar thinks that "one cannot distinguish so bluntly" "between an intangible divine interior life and a relationship of the Trinity with the affectible world." Indeed, when Scripture says that God's "bowels are moved" (Jer 31:20), it speaks of "an essential property

[of God] for which we lack a name," but which is analogous to the quality that gives man in the world a special nobility through pain (Maritain) [1108] . In God, pain and suffering are not a limitation but, on the contrary, they are an expression of his superabundance. But to understand this well, it is necessary to note that the possibility of a gift of God to the world - with mercy and pain - is necessarily based on the prior intra-Trinitarian gift of the Father to the Son. "In the absolute self-donation of the Father to the Son, of the Son to the Father, of both to the Spirit, there are no prior securities of any kind: it is a matter of giving everything, of keeping nothing, and therefore of a risk of losing everything if I am not accepted [1109] . There we can find the basis for thinking of dying in God, since pain and death can only be understood as an expression of his eternal love. Hence, God cannot be indifferent to the pain of the human being, much less to his definitive condemnation.

The esjaton from the Trinity

If "the true 'most new' is the Trinitarian life of God manifested in Jesus Christ" [1110] , then both those questions that eschatology had to face in a new way, as well as the way of understanding the final act, must be thought from the Trinitarian reality. This is what Balthasar does in the second half of *Theodramatica* V. He attempts a new look at the eschaton -from the Trinity-, but he does so from a double perspective (which he has been mentioning and which concerns him), that is, from the *theological* scope of the eventual eternal damnation and the reality of hell; and from the authentic meaning of Christian hope.

The possibility of eternal damnation

The "final act" is definitely a "Trinitarian drama" [1111] . Therefore, in asking himself about the possibility of this drama being transformed - finally - into a *Trinitarian tragedy* - because the prospect of eternal damnation can be called nothing else - Balthasar reflects on and draws new conclusions from three Christological events: the passage of the incarnate and dead Son from eternity to temporality (and the relationship between eternity and time that this signifies); the question of universal redemption versus the "no" of the human being; and the fact that judgment is, in reality, judgment *of Christ*. He thinks that, if these three facts are understood in all their depth and their consequences are properly deduced, it is possible to obtain, then, a new understanding of hell.

1. Relationship between eternity and temporality in Jesus descended into hell. The issue here is to understand well the relationship between worldly temporality and divine eternity which, in addition to making the world an image of God, implies that the incarnation and descent of the Son into the world does not, therefore, distance him from the divine life. Indeed, "God the Father created the world not 'outwardly' but with the Son in mind within the divine life. This

means that when the Son, becoming man, approaches the world in a definitive way, he, entering into time, does not abandon eternal life" [1112] . And this has a most mysterious consequence, which, moreover, is nothing more than the very mystery of the incarnation: his life is not only the expression and mission of the Father "*ad extra*", but also "in him the truly eternal life has penetrated worldly temporality" and, therefore, "it does not develop 'outside' eternity, but in it" [1113] . This is something very important, since, if in his temporal happenings the Son maintains his life "within eternity," then all his actions, feelings and situations lived in temporality must also have a correlate or be an expression of something permanent within the Trinity. Indeed, for Balthasar, the pain, the death, the total abandonment by the Father in hell and the darkness in which the incarnate Son is enveloped in his death, are paradoxically an expression of the eternal vitality and love of the Trinity. More concretely, this means that, if the mission of the Son implied death as part of the assumption of human reality in all its breadth and extent, and, moreover, that death is his "surrender of life, then that surrender has in God its archetype... For the Father gives his whole life to the Son" [1114] . Thus, "the death of Jesus, even his very bitter death in abandonment, is, seen in this way, a pure expression of his eternal Trinitarian vitality" [1115] . Even more remarkably, his "separation" from the Father must be perceived as an expression of their eternal union. Indeed, the Son,

> did not limit himself to participating in the general destiny of mortals, but descended and passed beyond their destiny and beyond the destiny of all possible remoteness and alienation from God. But such a distance is possible only within the economic Trinity, which transports the absolute otherness of the intradivine persons among themselves to the historical-salvific, including - and thus reconciling - the sinful distance from God (1116) .

Just as death was a paradoxical expression of divine vitality, so too "the Son's abandonment by God during the passion was a way of his bonding with the Father in the Holy Spirit". As the foundation of this fact (expressed in an extreme way in the cry of abandonment on the cross [Mt 27:46-50; Mk 15:34-37]), we find evidently Phil 2:6-7, which Balthasar - following Adrienne von Speyr - interprets from the important "concept of *consignment* (*Hinterlegung*) (of the divine power and glory of the Son) in the Father" [1117] , in the sense that the Son, who is of divine condition, nevertheless "left" - consigned - his divinity to the Father and entrusted himself completely to him in his "descent" into the world, which is then understood as an emptying - kenosis -. This fact can only be thought of as an expression of his intra-Trinitarian condition - as the fruit of his love - since the Son gives *everything* to the Father and dies for us trusting that the Father will not abandon him definitively to death (just as the Son, within the Trinity, trusts at every moment that the Father will continue to beget him eternally [1118]). For this reason, the Father "will give him back" all his divine condition only at the moment of the resurrection. This consignment and separation, "which is found in an inchoative form in the

incarnation, but which reaches its full development in the passion", is something tremendously serious and which is based on "the infinite difference of the persons within the one essence" (1119) .

By virtue of this difference, which, in its relationality, at the same time permits "consignment," the *cross* can become the "revelation of the innermost essence of God" [1120] : both of the difference of persons (which emerges with insurmountable clarity in abandonment) and of the unity of their essence, which becomes visible in the unity of the plan of redemption. Only a God-Man in his difference with respect to the Father can make disappear, atoning, all the existing distance between God and the sin of the world, both in totality for all and in totality for each individual (1121) .

This means that the Son takes upon himself man's distance from God and transforms it into closeness. He takes on the mystery of darkness, which is both the incomprehensibility of God and the sin of the human being who wants to break through that darkness, in such a way that, in the Son, both things - the communion between Father and Son and the alienation of sin - meet face to face [1122] . It is a separation that is not only physical but also spiritual, since it is not only a question of pain, nor of physical suffering, but principally of love consciously assumed. The estrangement, the darkness, the abandonment, is now then a "mode of the eternal convergence between Father and Son in the Spirit" [1123] . This paradoxical thought, characteristic of Balthasar, is simply a particular way of concretizing that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, in such a way that the earthly life of the Son necessarily expresses some aspect of his intra-Trinitarian relationship, given that the person is precisely that same relationship. Balthasar assumes this principle in all its depth and consequences. And, in addition, he expresses here that which, on the cross, God manifests himself precisely *sub contrario.* But what is new - and which will have very relevant consequences for the theme of hell - is that for Balthasar this relationship of temporality-eternity in the Son - and in him, of all history - strongly questions a certain "temporal" understanding of the last things, which places them - with extreme simplicity - at the end of history and leaves the paschal mystery - with equal simplicity - in a historically "previous" moment, without taking into account that a merely *temporal* thought is never sufficient to understand an eschatological reality.

2. The question of universal redemption and the Mysterium Iniquitatis. The second reflection has to do with the question about the possibility of eternal damnation of some people (none? some? or many?). The theme -problem- is of long standing: from the anathematisms against Origen pronounced in the Synod of Constantinople, in the year 543 [1124] , to a certain attraction of some contemporary theology for the doctrine of apocatastasis (or universal reconciliation) [1125] . For Balthasar, the problem lies in the difficulty of converging the biblical texts and arguments "that speak of the double outcome of the final judgment and of the

eternity of the pains of hell" with those that "speak truly in favor of universal reconciliation and give the place that corresponds to this fact" [1126] . At least, one can "admit both possibilities as parallel" [1127] . Hence Balthasar, instead of investigating which of the two is to be considered correct, or theologically and magisterially more plausible, will try to find their possible reconciliation. But, in order to do so, he must first carefully clarify two biblical themes, which are important for a proper understanding of the question, and have not always been sufficiently taken into account: the change of aeons that meant the passage from the Old to the New Testament; and the fact that, in the New Testament, the judgment of God has been transformed into the judgment of Jesus Christ. "Only after having followed this 'dialectic' between grace and judgment to its depths is it possible to approach, gropingly, the last question: that of whether and how a harmony, or at least a convergence between the two poles, which seem to exclude each other, is foreseeable" (1128) .

The fact that the New Testament uses practically the same symbolic material to speak of judgment as the Old Testament makes us lose sight of "the qualitative distance between the two testaments" as far as the understanding of God's judgment is concerned [1129] . Indeed, Israel thinks from the Sinai covenant, which, being "an unbreakable covenant from God's side, will mean reciprocal fidelity", and where "reward has a great preponderance compared to punishment", but which also implies "a perfect symmetry between promise and threat" [1130] . That explains then the history of Israel as an alternation between fidelity and betrayal on the part of the people and, as a consequence, blessing and punishment on the part of God. And the final derivation of all this was that Israel felt itself entitled to impose punishments on its members and to establish its own justice with the fulfillment of the law. In this context, a final judgment with a double outcome can be incorporated and understood without problems. With Jesus, on the other hand, this covenant "has come to unity in his person as God and as man. Thus, he, as the covenant personified, is also the truthfulness *(emeth)* and faithfulness *(sedek)* of God fully realized, truthfulness and faithfulness that are no longer *behind* his justice of reward and punishment, but are found *in* that justice" [1131] . In his death is given both "the (punitive) justice of God" and the gift of the Spirit in our hearts (Jer 31:31-34), whereby we are incorporated into the new covenant and become one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28). Here, everything is concentrated in Christ.

Therefore, the New Testament "considers that judgment has been displaced from its ancient place" and transferred to the moment of the cross [1132] and, since there death has been destroyed and eternity has been given to us, "then the whole symmetrical doctrine of retribution designed by the Old Testament falls to the ground". Now, indeed, "there is a radical *asymmetry* in that the judgment of God has taken place, once and for all, in the cross

and resurrection of Jesus and all that may follow the event will be but a repercussion of it included beforehand in it" [1133] . It is clear then that the similarity of images used in both testaments does not represent a similarity in the theological reality to which they refer, since "the cross is the decisive judgment because here the Son, through his love, embraces and lifts up the sin of the world, which has deserved a just judgment". However, this does not mean that the OT judgment was wrong or had to be substituted, but that it is preserved *within* this other judgment of love that "could not unfold on any other basis than that of justice... When the Father judge looks at his Son (who bears the sins of the world) with the eyes of justice, then he sees in him nothing that could fall under the dominion of judgment: thus justice no longer has to look for anything here; judgment dissolves of itself in love" [1134] . This is what Balthasar and Adrienne have called "the elevating embrace (*die Unterfassung*) of all sins by the infinite love of God," which implies that "sin, evil, must be *finite*, and finds its end in the love that embraces them." This is a doctrine that - it is good to remember - was already found in Fathers such as Gregory of Nyssa, Irenaeus and Origen [(1135)] .

However, Balthasar also recognizes the difficulties that arise at this point. One must avoid any simplification in a subject that involves the *Mysterium Iniquitatis.*

> In fact, [with sin] it is not only a matter of a magnitude detached from the sinner that must be made to disappear, but of his own free self-denial, which God, if he respects the freedom given to him, cannot violate simply because his absolute freedom is more powerful than his created freedom, which is finite. Nor can it be an extra-insecistic forgiveness of God by virtue of the fact that the "merits" of Christ are greater and outweigh the demerits of the sinner. Thus the possibility of a vicarious representation is doubtful in this area, even if it is understood in the accentuated form of a Trinitarian "elevating embrace" that overcomes all the guilt of the world [(1136)] .

For this reason, as Adrienne affirmed, it cannot be a question of "a kind of diffuse general redemption", since that "would not be a treatment humanly worthy of the sinner" [1137] . The human being will always be free to follow his Shepherd or not, to accept his invitation or not. In this sense, hell is not simply an "empty threat", but a "divine truth", that is, something real and possible for the free human being [1138] . Many biblical texts are, moreover, very clear: hell would be the result of sin against the Holy Spirit (Mt 12:32), or the eternal Hades for the rich (Lk 16:23), or the place of the goats of the left, who did not love Christ in the poor (Mt 25:41). Nor do these and other similar texts allow us to think that this situation of pain will last only until the universal judgment. Even Paul, "who used such strong words for universal reconciliation, is careful to anticipate the outcome of the judgment of God and of Christ (1 Cor 4:3). In this matter we are faced with the very "grave [situation] of those who resist the grace of the New Testament, acquired at the high price of the cross" [1139] . For all these reasons, it must be said that "the outcome of the final act appears uncertain for both parties.

Naturally, it is so for the sinful man, who cannot procure an absolute certainty of salvation. But it is also uncertain for the just man who, "because he is exposed to judgment, cannot have absolute certainty of salvation. On the other hand, both "have the right to hope that grace will receive them," although neither "can dispose of the outcome. All that remains is to wait with a hope that does not disappoint [(1140)] .

3. Justice and grace in the judgment of Christ. The third theme is how to relate "justice and love (or grace) in the judgment of Christ on men who fail" [1141] . One thing is clear: God always puts grace before right, since otherwise no one could be saved, and also because salvation is a gift and not the fruit of our works. But, on this basis, to sustain a hypothetical "definitive declaration of innocence" of every guilty man and woman would be a humiliation for the freedom of the human being and also a defeat for God, who would have "to despise right and justice in order to place a grace" that would have been merited by someone who "is alien to the guilty" [1142] . This extremely difficult situation is the one that Balthasar tries to resolve, starting from a solution that does not eliminate the tension inherent in the fact itself. To do so, he examines the meaning and mode of judgment, in both its subjective and objective aspects. This will then allow him to hypothesize about hell, which is the ultimate goal of the reflections he is making on these three previous aspects.

With regard to the first - the subjective aspect - we know that every "individual person will be confronted at some point, after his death, with the unveiled truth and demand of God". But "the frightening thing about the idea is that the greater the love that God offers and demonstrates to him, the more demanding must be the consequent response demanded of man" [1143] . And the marvelous thing about that moment will be that the human being, freed from everything that previously prevented him from seeing, will now no longer be able to deceive himself, in such a way that he will recognize himself as he is: "who he was, what he has become... [and the scales will fall] from his eyes" under the light of God, who will illuminate him completely [1144] . "'In that sense, it is possible to consider the judgment as a kind of self-judgment' [1145] , although in the light of divine truth which, as such, is the truth of what God has done in Jesus Christ for man" [1146] . From that moment on, it will no longer be possible to try to justify oneself on the basis of pretended personal good works, since we will honestly perceive that our life will not have corresponded to what God expected and had foreseen for us. Moreover, this is the basic experience of every human being, and many times in this life we have already become aware of it: we are all sinners. Therefore, in this self-judgment, we must set aside all hope of self-justification and surrender ourselves completely to the mercy of God.

The second aspect - the objective disposition - is somewhat more complex. Normally it is

understood as a scale, in which the good and bad works of the person are weighed. But this is a pre-Christian image (already present in ancient Egypt) which, theologically, is not in keeping with the novelty of the Good News (Gospel). In fact, although in Christianity it is also a matter of weighing the "weight of one's *whole life*", after Christ it is no longer simply a matter of a "subjective" measurement - as in self-judgment - "but everything is verified objectively with an eye to the sentence of the divine Judge". This implies two things. On the one hand, it means that "man's self-judgment before God cannot be the ultimate act of judgment because human freedom, which has not set itself, but has been given to itself by God in its measure, subsists ultimately in the realm of disposition of *absolute* freedom, toward which it necessarily transcends itself in order to be consummated there" [1147] . Thus, self-judgment is framed *within* the judgment of God, who is prior and superior, and, therefore, is the one who always has the last word. On the other hand, as for the act of *weighing*, it should not be understood as a quantitative comparison of the good and bad works of life, since freedom does not resolve itself principally in the sum of choices, but possesses "an infinite horizon against which it can make a qualitative choice". Thus, faced with this horizon, each person decides or recognizes either that freedom belongs to him or herself, or that freedom was given to him or her and is owed to Another. This is the determining choice of life. Now, this foundational decision and the daily choices are interrelated, because this "fundamental choice" "is not made *in abstracto,* but in each of the successive situations of life" of each day. This shows the limitation and finiteness of human freedom, since the fundamental choice is not identifiable with each particular choice, but, at the same time, it cannot possibly exist without being incarnated in them. However - and this is its good news - this is precisely what gives the human being the permanent possibility of conversion. Even more: this allows that, at the end of life, not only the final state to which the human being has arrived is weighed, but that the *whole* life, in all its moments, is weighed, so that everything that was lived as good - for example in youth - remains, in spite of a possible later change of option and of life [1148] . Finally, all this opens us to the question of whether a fundamental negative decision can really be expressed in all the situations of a life, and not contain any more love.

With all this, Balthasar did not want to undo the judgment, but, on the contrary, to put it in its place: in Christ, objective judge and savior. Objectivity is not given by an impersonal scale, but by the gaze of the Creator and Savior of the human being. In this sense, "a simple external vicarious representation without an interior effect on the guilty person would not suffice for the sentence of acquittal", since it must have an internal acceptance on the part of the pardoned person, if it is not to be a humiliating and unworthy act for the person in question. Without freedom, it would not be worthy of man and, moreover, would arouse further

rebellion. And all this must be said with even greater reason when the judge is the very one who has come to save (Jn 12:47) and, therefore, will do everything on his part to achieve the success of his task. And if he does not succeed, it is not that he would "positively turn him away from himself [...], but that he would have to abandon the culprit negatively to his persistent will". Here we could then speak "of a tragedy, not only for man, but for God himself" [1149] . And Balthasar concludes:

> Is it legitimate to go beyond what has been said? It is not possible to take further categorical steps; at most, hypothetical ones. For the simple reason that the question of hell, as it appeared in connection with "self-judgment," can be seriously proposed only in a personal-existential sense. "Both an uncritical conception of the double denouement of human history and an apodictic protest against it are threatened by the danger of wanting to practice eschatology from the perspective of the spectator, but not of the person affected.... The judgment of the extent to which a man persists, or can persist, definitively, in truth, in a posture of resistance to Christ escapes, in spite of all the negative phenomena that pile up, to my possibilities and exceeds my competences" (W. Kreck) [(1150)] .
>
> But if Christianity is Good News of salvation and if we are told that God desires the salvation of all men (1 Tim 2:4), such steps seem to be permitted, expressly only hypothetical [(1151)] .

This is what Balthasar will now undertake. On the basis of all the reflections made - which certainly have a good theological and biblical foundation - he will attempt a new conception of hell, which can better resolve the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter and which is more in conformity with the totality of Scripture. But he says it clearly: these are only *hypothetical lucubrations*. And that is how they must be interpreted, if we want to be fair and honest with his thinking.

Approaches to hell

In the understanding that it is a *possibility* (something that is thinkable or "approximations"), that is born of his own disquisitions on a topic that implies something central to human life, but, above all, that implies our own being the image of God; and that is based on adequate theological foundations -which he exposes clearly-; Balthasar attempts a new understanding of hell, that does justice to God and that is in harmony with biblical and magisterial teaching. It is a novel proposal, which has not always been well received, but which has its meaning and its attractive aspects, which resolve some important problems surrounding the theme of eternal damnation, although it departs from the traditional understanding-widely held by the majority-that the eternally damned exist, and that, in that eventuality, they manifest and glorify the justice of God. Their proposal, as we have recalled, "expressly hypothetical only," attempts to carry to its ultimate consequences the fact "that God wills the salvation of all men (1 Tim 2:4)" [1152] . The argumentation consists of five steps. First, he gives two fundamental

theological criteria, which call into question the possibility of a complete and fully free choice of man against God: (1) finite human freedom is always within the infinite freedom of God, and its rejection is, therefore, a contradiction within the human being himself - not in God; (2) the human being has been created and lives in the Son, in such a way that, prior to his failures, he is founded within the fidelity of Christ. Then, (3) he reflects on the meaning of eternity in God and its relationship with the temporality of creation, in such a way as to better understand what and how time passes in hell. And, finally, from these three theological reflections, he *conjectures* that hell can be understood as realized in two moments: (4) in the encounter of the damned with Christ in hell itself, to which the crucified descended; and (5) in the separation of sin from man, who is thrown (sin, not the human being) into hell as useless remains. And that understanding would imply both the eternity of hell, the justice of God, the freedom of the human being and the triumph of God's mercy in the saving Son. It is a very novel and interesting possibility of understanding.

1. Finite freedom exists only from infinite freedom. Since finite freedom (human freedom) has been established by absolute freedom (God), it "is not master of its origin" and, moreover, "its goal and its formal object have been coined by that same origin: the good par antonomasia". Hence, in fact, finite freedom cannot become "detached from God" to the point of "enclosing itself completely in itself as a whole in its decision" [1153] . Indeed, "the seal of God remains engraved in its structure," and only from that "transcendental structure can it decide for some particular good" and, even, "it can choose to set itself as the absolutely sufficient good." But always from that given structure, where the infinite freedom that has originated it has left its permanent imprint [1154] . Therefore, "if it chooses itself as the absolute good, then it places in itself a contradiction that consumes it", since the object for which it was created "-which is in reality infinitely autonomous absolute freedom- intrinsically contradicts the arrogance of finite freedom to conceive itself as infinite" [1155] . Thus, from this first structuring element of the human condition and its freedom, Balthasar concludes that "if this contradiction is conceived as definitive, then it is hell" [1156] . And since this contradiction exists in the damned himself - as a fire arising from the very contradiction between God's love and human hatred - hell exists, therefore, "in the damned himself, in his state" [1157] , as an internal contradiction.

2. Something of human freedom is "deposited" in the Trinitarian God. Linked to the above is the fact that "in the finite being, insofar as he is a person, is imprinted, moreover, the *imago Trinitatis*, which allows the person to become - and to be himself - a person only in a reciprocal relationship with other persons" [1158] . This means that human freedom can only develop as "interhuman freedom" and, moreover, that this is a simple image of its deepest destiny - the product of God's grace - "to realize its freedom within the eternal exchange of

Trinitarian love, where the absolute freedom of one hypostasis is given to the others and received from them". Then, if the original design of the human being is "the supernatural vocation" "to Trinitarian love," it must be accepted that "something of the freedom granted to him is 'consigned' (*"hinterlegt" ist*) in God to be transferred to him as the ultimate gift, consummating his freedom, in the exchange of love," since that design can be realized in all its fullness only by God's action and gift [1159] . When Jn 1:3 says that nothing was created without the Word or outside the Word, it is affirming that everything is in the Word and must be understood within it. This means that, prior to any failure, infidelity or oscillation of the creature, there exists in it "an intangible foundation, subtracted from the freedom of the creature" [1160] , which is God himself in his creative Word , and which, moreover, on the cross has reconciled everything with himself. Therefore, "Christ himself is the essence of our freedom consigned to God" [1161] . All this has for Balthasar a very important consequence:

> A man's attempt to exclude himself from the Trinitarian life that in Christ envelops the world and to be hell itself, remains captured by the curve of Christ, and, in that sense, is determined by the essence and meaning of this curve, which is to communicate to the world the freedom of the absolute good (1162) .

Thus, our inclusion in Christ, although it may appear as a limitation, is, in truth, a profound liberation, because it signifies our introduction into Trinitarian love and the "letting freedom triumph in us" [1163] . Well, both the fact that our finite freedom exists from infinite freedom, and that our human freedom is deposited in Christ (and in the Trinity), are at least showing us "the internal limits and the debatability of the idea of an absolutely free self-choice of man (in complete negation of God)" (1164) .

3. *Different types of time.* In order to understand hell, in addition to pondering this indissoluble relationship of the mundane with the Absolute, it is indispensable to examine the theme of time and its relationship with eternity. First of all, Balthasar reminds us of the existence of different "types of time," something that has not always been duly taken into account when dealing with eschatological themes. Indeed, there is *eternity,* as opposed to temporal mutability and, therefore, as "the definitive and immovable". But when we speak of eternity - as distinct from temporal and finite life - the Fathers of the Church already distinguished two types of "eternity" (although they were often mixed, both in catechesis and in theology): one type (or conception) of eternity, of ontological root "(coming from Plato), which started from the essence of the immaterial soul", and which simply meant life without end; and another type (or conception) of eternity, of theological root, "which attributed only to God the essential immortality" and, to which the human being could only enter if he received the gift of participating in the immortal essence of God [1165] . From this double

characteristic or types of eternity, St. Thomas will later affirm that only those who freely participate in the vision of God, *truly* participate in the eternity of God; on the other hand, "in hell there is no true eternity, but rather time", even if it is a time "without end" (S. Th. I, 10, 3 ad 1, ad 2). This means that there are two different modes of "timeless duration": a first way is that which is lived as "participation in eternal eternity"; and the second - very different - is that which is lived precisely as "deprivation of it." And it is clear that both forms "can even come to oppose each other" [1166] . This is well understood for the reason that to contemplate God means to participate in him "who encloses in himself all time" (S. Th. I, 13, 2 ad 3; 10, 2 ad 4) and, therefore, he who is excluded from that vision of God - and, for that very reason, from participation in the being of God - must necessarily be equally excluded from participation in that "all time"; and hence he must also remain secluded "in the timelessness of his own being, deprived of all contact with God and with another creature". It would be something like a dead -although standing- subtracted "from all that in time is given as positive extension" (1167) .

We have, then - in addition to finite temporality - two types of eternity - or timelessness: participation in the eternity of God, and life without end (associated with a certain absence of God). But, for Balthasar, there is also "a third form of timelessness that does not coincide" with either of the two previous ones: "It is the timelessness of the state of the Son on the cross, since in that state there must be sufficient 'space' for the (infernal) experience of sinners abandoned by God, both in terms of the intensity of the abandonment on the cross and its worldwide extension". This is the mysterious situation that Christ experiences on the cross, which is related to the whole of human history, and which, at the same time, embraces the situation of abandonment and hell of all sinful humanity. Now, in order to understand the meaning of this third type of atemporality, it is necessary to keep in mind two elements. First, that

> such an assumption of the loss of God by the sinner can only take place through an elevating embrace (*Unterfassung*) that makes the state of the Son even more timeless than the infernal one, since only he, welcoming in himself the abandonment of sinners, can fully measure what the loss of the Father means (1168) .

That is to say, this unfathomable situation experienced by the Son - which mystics such as Eckhart, John of the Cross , Tauler or Adrienne von Speyr have tried to express from their own experience - can be understood as experiencing the torments of hell and feeling "without God, punished and rejected by God, the object of his anger and wrath", even seeming "that this state will last eternally" (John of the Cross) [1169] . Therefore, this abandonment experienced by the Son - and by those who participate in his cross - has "the weight of an eternity", possesses a solitude until death - where each instant disappears completely - and is

lived as an eternity, because "every time one thinks that one dies now, one does not die because the death of sin is timeless" [1170] . In other words, the experience of the Son on the cross is the experience of an endless time in the death and solitude of hell, where the Son welcomes God's abandonment of all sinners of all time.

And, secondly, the fact that there

> the timelessness of his passion, the timelessness of the redemption and the timelessness of the following of Christ are made manifest. Indeed, the Passion of Jesus has a where and a when within the human limits of time and space. But it overflows these limits on all sides, and one can participate in it both before and a thousand years later (1171) .

What is important for us here is to understand that this "timelessness of the cross is not the pure negation of the time of hell, but a 'supra-time' [1172] ", since it overflows the limits of time. It has, yes, something of the "endlessness" of hell, but, at the same time, pierced by the eternity of the Trinitarian life of the Son - present in him, although in a state of abasement. Indeed, the separation brought about between the Son and the Father from the kenosis of the incarnation "is an economic expression of eternal life" and, therefore, his death and descent into hell, as well as his resurrection and ascension into heaven, are "present life", "a manifestation of his life" [1173] . "Thus, the suffering of redemption always stands out immeasurably above all the finitude of sin" [1174] . Now, this very mysterious "over-time" of the cross - which is at once mortal and vital timelessness - into which the Son incorporates all sinners, is what will now allow Balthasar to think even more deeply about the reality of hell.

4. Hell as a place of encounter with Christ. Here Balthasar - starting from the "elevating embrace" of the forsaken Son - conjectures on the possibility of rethinking hell *from* this encounter with the forsaken Son. Indeed, reflection on the type of timelessness that can occur in the cross and in the descent of the Son into hell has shown us that the abandonment suffered by the Son and the abandonment suffered by a condemned person have a point of encounter, since the abandonment of the condemned person is configured according to the abandonment of the Son. But with a very important difference: the sinner did not want "the bitter consequences of sin", so we can think that "he does not want to walk to the end the *entire* road that leads him away from God"; instead "the Son walked to the end, in obedience, the road that places him precisely in the direction in which the one who is distancing himself from God finds himself". And so, even if the sinner wants to put himself beyond God's reach, "the Son placed himself before man in such a way that man, even when he has turned his back on God, sees him before him and must go to meet him". This is because the Son, by becoming incarnate, has taken on all flesh and has placed himself in every place where there is a human being, even in the most "unsuspected, denied, repugnant" place [1175] . The Son is

found in absolutely every place:

> In other words: whoever would choose total abandonment for himself and thereby demonstrate his absoluteness before God would find before him the figure of one who is more absolutely abandoned than he is himself [(1176)] .

And that is precisely what redemption is: going out to look for the sheep that had left the fold and gone astray (Lk 15:1-10). If this is so, then it means that God "is free to go out to meet the sinner who has strayed from him, taking the form of the impotence of the crucified Brother, abandoned by God, and precisely in such a way that it is clear to the one who is strayed from him that this one who is abandoned (like me) by God is abandoned for my sake" [1177] . Now, the remarkable thing about this encounter - given its characteristics as an encounter of the abandoned - is that here it is no longer possible to speak - with respect to God - of violence on finite freedom, since "if God in his solitude appears as even more alone" than he "who believes he has chosen" "the complete solitude of being-alone-for-itself" [1178] , then there is no violence possible, because the poorest of all has no way of exercising any violence whatsoever. Rather, it only arouses compassion. We are faced here with the "incomprehensible fact by which the reality of one closed in oneself in a timeless way is opened by the irrefutable presence of another, who is next to him in an equally timeless way, and calls into question his presumed apparent inaccessibility". Now, that inaccessibility, despite being that of a condemned person who has autonomously decided to deny God, is not totally impassable, since it is built on the basis of a contradiction. And, then, "it is possible that he whose [impassable] shell can be broken is not yet really in hell, but in a resistance to God that puts him on the road to hell" [1179] . Indeed, as long as there is a possibility of an encounter with the Son and of breaking this closure to God and to the other, then we cannot yet speak of hell (as a definitive place of total negation of God). And all this is possible because the Son, starting from his own passion, "has transformed 'the way of man's destiny' into 'the way of obedience of the eternal Son'" [1180] , bringing mercy, light and love to the place of disconsolation and solitude, thus transforming - somehow - hell into purgatory (Adrienne) [1181] , since the suffering and abandonment of the Son "is the opposite of being-closed-in-itself", it is rather its antipode, a "*modus* of the personality as relationship" [(1182)] .

5. Hell as an unusable remainder. If the above is conceivable - always within what we can think of as possibilities, hypotheses or approximations - then Balthasar can conjecture a new way of understanding hell, since he has never said that it does not exist. After the "meeting of the abandoned" and the elevating embrace of the Son,

> sin separated from the sinner by the work of the cross, a reality not null and void due to the force invested in it by man, would remain in hell as that definitively condemned by God. Sins "are forgiven, separated from us, taken away from us. They are sent to the place where

everything that God does not want and what he condemns is: to hell. That is their place" (1183) .

Hell would be the equivalent of the Jewish Gehenna, the place where, "it seems, 'garbage was continually burned' 1184 " and to which John the Baptist (Mt 3:10, 12; Lk 3:17), Jesus (Mk 9:43), John (Jn 16:6-7) and the Apocalypse refer when they speak of the "fire that does not go out"into which they are thrown.12; Lk 3:17), Jesus (Mk 9:43), John (Jn 16:6-7) and the Apocalypse, when they speak of the "fire that does not go out" where the sterile trees, the members of the body that cause sin, the branches that do not bear fruit, or Babylon itself are thrown, that is, the useless, the useless 1185 . Thus, "the chaotic thing engendered by sin, Babylon, is burned eternally. That which is consumed consumes itself without end" 1186 . As can be seen, in this conception of hell it is very important that hell *exists,* "for it is the permanent testimony in favor of the forgiveness of sin. In this sense, 'hell is a gift of divine grace' 1187 " because the Son can show the Father, in his own person, "the sin taken away from the world"; in his bride - humanity/Church - he can show him "the redeemed sinner, no longer a sinner"; and in hell, she can show him "the sin of the world purged from redeemed men", that is, sin now as something "formless and undefined, whose separation from sinners was the work of his cross" 1188 . This is a possible way of understanding hell, which is compatible both with the freedom of the human being and with the power and mercy of God, as well as not contradicting the biblical and theological data, and in some aspects, even following them more closely (1189) .

The duty to wait

The question of eternal damnation and the conjectures about hell can only be realized and understood from the redemptive act of Christ and from an authentic theology of (biblical) hope that springs from there. This is the third theological question that Balthasar now confronts in his attempt to understand the esjaton from the Trinity. His reflection will be based on three intimately connected soteriological aspects: an unshakable trust in the mercy of God, the death of Christ as a liberating embrace of every human being, and the final judgment as an event of resurrection and purification. These three aspects give rise to and allow us to have a firm hope in the total success of the Son's redemptive work.

A hope that does not deceive. In the first place, Balthasar specifies that "the hope of which we must speak here is the hope of the salvation of all men. In this regard, we have already seen that in the Old Testament "the double outcome of the judgment" (that is, that some are saved and others are condemned) was "considered almost indisputable," but that this certainty was at least qualified - if not questioned - with the coming of Christ 1190 . Indeed,

In the New Testament there is a great tension between sayings which, by virtue of Christ's

reconciliation of the world with God, look forward to the prospect of the redemption of all, and those other sayings which maintain the Old Testament threats of judgment and even increase them, precisely because the act of atonement has taken place on the cross [(1191)].

This is a theme that we have already mentioned when speaking of the judgment of God and of the ambiguities arising from the New Testament use of the Old Testament conceptual apparatus - of the ancient "Day of Yahweh" - to refer now to the novelty of the Christ event. In other words, we find two theologies that coexist together in the New Testament, but which do not seem to have reached an adequate synthesis. "Thus, for long periods in the history of the Church the tension existing in the New Testament texts remained open" [1192]. But after the condemnation of Origenism (DH 411) in the Synod of Constantinople - in 543 - the tendency "to suppose the double outcome of the final judgment" as that which corresponds more adequately "with sound Christian doctrine" [1193]. This can be clearly perceived in the permanent Christian iconography (it is a matter of observing Michelangelo's "final judgment" in the Sistine Chapel) and in the almost undisputed theology of St. Augustine about the "glorification" of God's *justice* in the fate of the damned [1194]. But the affirmations of the Bible, as we have already said, are not so one-sided, but are rather more confrontational - and one part of them affirms precisely the redemption of all human beings, which has been effectively carried out by Christ - and, therefore, it is perfectly legitimate - in the way we have already said - to say that the redemption of all human beings has been effectively carried out by Christ, it is perfectly legitimate - in the manner of Therese of Lisieux or Hildegard of Bingen, the two Mechthilds (of Hackeborn and Magdeburg) or Julian of Norwich - to have a *blind* hope in his mercy, precisely where no theological speculation can achieve any result. Indeed, "hope endures in the believer where all speculative systematization fails; a hope that, according to Paul, 'does not deceive' (Rom 5:5)" [(1195)].

For Balthasar, the mystical experience and, in general, the reflection of the saints of the Church are also a "theological place" from which one can - with scientific rigor - deduce some truths and convictions of faith. Hence their theological-believing conclusion: although, when looking at the judgment that awaits every sinful man and woman, it becomes evident to have an attitude of respect - and even fear - because it is impossible that nothing worthy of condemnation can be found (St. Ambrose); however, this cannot take away hope, neither in the redemption accomplished by Christ, nor in his infinite mercy. In a certain way, each one will find himself "in a certain measure, at the same time, on the right and on the left of the judge". Therefore, "all that remains for him is to hope blindly in the miracle that took place already on the cross of Christ, but which needs all the courage of Christian hope to be applied to himself: that, by the power of that miracle, what is worthy of condemnation in him may be removed from him, cast into the useless remnant that is burned before the gates of the Holy

City" [1196] . This hope - infinite and blind - is based exclusively on the act of Christ and on his love poured out upon us. We are not speaking here of a conviction, but of a *hope* against all hope, like that which Abraham teaches us (Rom 4:18-22). To possess this hope is not simply a concession or a simple and free possibility of the believer; on the contrary, for Balthasar it is a *duty* of every Christian. It is part of his authentic faith in God - as love - and in the efficacy of his redemptive action. And, by way of example, Balthasar cites a text from a dialogue of St. Mechthild with Jesus and another text from Thérèse of Lisieux:

> "The Lord says to Mechthild:] Truly I tell you, it is a great joy to Me that men expect great things from Me. However great their faith and daring may be, I will give them much more than they deserve. In fact, it is impossible for man not to receive what he has believed and expected from my power and my mercy". Teresa herself repeats to the end: "One never expects too much from God, who is so powerful and so merciful; one receives from him as much as one trusts in him" (1197) .

2. The uplifting embrace of Christ's death. Balthasar then dwells on those two aspects of Christ's redemptive work that are the foundation of our hope. The first of these is Christ's death itself, which "unites all the essential characteristics of human death," but which has freed humanity from the tragedy of death [1198] . Jesus, like every human being, walked towards death - towards his hour - a moment that he did not know either and that was the expected and desired horizon, which had made him divest himself of his divine condition - he had "deposed" his divinity before the Father - and which was "an act of obedience to the eternal Father (Phil 2:6f)". Therefore, in his case, we must speak not of a simple having been thrown into existence (Heidegger), but much more appropriately of a *sending* into the world, where his condition of self-estrangement will accompany him throughout his mission. But then this means that, this "giving of self" corresponds to an "act of the Sender himself [the Father] who, in his acting, was and is by principle the one who gives what is most proper to him" [1199] . Consequently, here - in the life and death of Jesus - we can already see the expression of an absolute love, which is twofold: love of the one who sends and love of the one who is sent, love of the Father and love of the Son.

Now, since the death of Christ is part of his sending and self-giving -it is the culminating moment of his kenosis-, this self-donation -which occurs together with the self-donation of the Father in the Son- has the sense of a "raising up embracing -and gathering in itself- the concrete ends of all those who could not understand their own end as love". In fact, the death of Christ -because it is the death of the Logos-Archetype sent by the Father- *embraces* the death of every human being: that of those who live it "as an involuntary rupture of their finitude" or that of those who experience it "as a desired abandonment of all the burden lying in that finitude", and even that of those "who would have liked to keep their being for

themselves or to throw it away from themselves as something annoying"[1200]. That death *for love* and, therefore, embracing and elevating of all other death, is interpreted by the Bible in two ways that are inseparable from each other. First, it understands it as a "vicarious representation of all sinful deaths". This means -exactly- that this death was a self-surrender on the part of the Son to be abandoned "by God and, consequently, to an impotence that embraces and elevates all possible abandonment by God and impotence of sinners". In this way, his surrender to death attracts to himself the death of every human being and, with that, "changes the value of every death and of every life that runs towards such a death, introducing them into his death, the only definitive one". This is what is meant by a vicarious representation, a dying for others, a changing the meaning of the death of others. It is well known that it was Paul who reflected on this theme in the most eximious way. "But in that *action* of God is enclosed also the second aspect: the *doctrine* that such action is the notification of an absolute love which is revealed as such in the Trinitarian essence of God"[1201]. Therefore, since the death of Jesus has become an expression of his infinite love, with that the incredible paradox of what happened is manifested, since the inseparability and love between the Father and the Son has been expressed here precisely in their total separation and abandonment, where the Holy Spirit, together with inspiring the total surrender, paradoxically makes of that surrender and abandonment a moment of most profound unity, precisely because of the mutual love expressed. This is why Balthasar can conclude that "the doctrine of the Trinity of God, which is a new, specifically Christian form of negative theology, remains, as doctrine, the documentation of God's absolute action by virtue of which God will henceforth see the sin of the world in the light of the Son's embracing death"[(1202)].

But Paul also emphasizes with great truth that this elevating embrace of the Son causes "all deaths to be affected by the death of Christ by virtue of the character of vicarious representation that it has. Precisely, this "being affected" of all deaths by that of Christ appears clearly in 2 Cor 5:14-15, where it is affirmed that "if one died for all, all died," so that "those who live no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised". In other words, we have truly died in Christ. While this means, first of all, an invitation to conform ourselves "to the interior sentiments" of Christ and to unite ourselves sacramentally to that death, it also implies that we participate in the destiny of the one who has died for us; and since that dead man is now risen, and both moments constitute an indissoluble unity, then we have died *and* risen with Christ: we truly participate in his life and resurrection. Our life is thus now eschatological because it is marked in a central way "by the most radical death and by the most radical turning toward eternal life." This is what it means for Paul to be dead and risen with Christ (Rom 6:4-6; Gal 6:14; Eph 2:6)[1203]. All this points to the believer

being liberated by Christ, because he no longer lives for himself, but for Christ (Rom 14:7-8), in such a way that "the 'empty space' created by the 'de-yoisoning' of faith is filled by Christ and by his 'Spirit', who 'confirms' to us that, like the Son, we are sons of the Father, as co-related through the Spirit with the Son, so that the *imago trinitatis* [= image of the Trinity] is realized in us" (1204) .

And, finally, it must be said that obviously none of this eliminates physical death, since God alone is the life and source of life, from whom Adam received his life at the origin of history. Thus, in dying, man really experiences who is the true "Lord" of his existence, and then "death now appears as a new availability of man forced by God, of man who, as dead, can no longer dispose of himself" 1205 . "Where man encounters his absolute limits, with death, there begins the absolute power of God" 1206 . But along with noticing his own fragility and lack of life, he also discovers that the Son of God has given to the world "the eternal life of God", justly "embracing and elevating" in his own death "every death far from God of sinners, and, with it, revaluing it in himself". Death has become an occasion to show the power of God's life. "The expropriation of the sinner in death - which objectively was a new availability to the living God - was in turn turned to Christ through his radical self-expropriation" 1207 . If Christ has died for all sinners, then the death of every sinner now acquires an objective relationship to the death of Christ: there is a mutual reciprocity, one death belongs to the other. What was the fruit of punishment has now become a proof of the glory and power of God. So faith will be to recognize this new form of relationship of our death with the death of Christ and to begin to live a sacramental-mystical and ethical-existential "dead" life. Only in this way will we know the power of his resurrection.

3. God's unique judgment. The second aspect that underlies our hope is the fact that - biblically - there is a unique judgment, which implies a process of purification as part of the judgment itself, and is even linked to the resurrection. This is a theological conviction of Balthasar, which he develops at length. For him, it is clear that "in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New, there is only one judgment, just as there is only one Day of Yahweh or of Christ" (1208) . "This means that, in the totality of the Bible, which knows only a single judgment, the universal judgment ('all peoples will be gathered before him' [Mt 25:32]) will be at the same time an absolutely personal and particular judgment" 1209 . Indeed, although in Sacred Scripture itself one can perceive a certain tension between these two "moments" of judgment-the particular for each one and the universal/final-yet Scripture never renounces "the unity of judgment", since it places "both aspects in the closest reciprocal proximity", as "two stages of the one and the same general event" 1210 . It is always a judgment that applies to "each and every" human being and that, therefore, can only take

place "'at the end'", on the "Day of the Lord" [1211] . But it is not specified more precisely whether it is the "end for the individual or for the history of mankind as a whole". The only important thing is that this "judgment on each individual (the particular, better: the personal judgment)" is located "in the act of universal judgment" [(1212)] .

On the other hand, the resurrection of Christ - as a definitive and universal event - unified two aspects that in "Jewish eschatology before Jesus" were juxtaposed: "first, the expectation of a partial or general resurrection of the dead at the end of the time of the world as a requirement for judgment; second, the idea that certain privileged souls - at first the martyrs, later the righteous in general - are elevated (or raptured) immediately after their death to the sphere of God" [1213] . In the risen Jesus both elements were united: if Jesus had appeared risen, then the hope in the resurrection of the dead had already been fulfilled (Acts 4:2) and, with him, in the historical present, "the end time" had already "radically broken through" [1214] . But the resurrection of Christ was also recognized "as an 'elevation'" or "exaltation" (Phil 2:9; Acts 2:33) of the just, who by his righteousness is preserved from sheol and transferred "immediately to the sphere of God" [1215] . Hence Paul, who speaks of "an expected physical co-resurrection through co-suffering and co-dying with Christ (Phil 3:10f)" [1216] , and John, who affirms that everyone "who believes has eternal life" (Jn 6:47) and will rise "on the last day" (Jn 6:54), and "though he died, yet shall he live" because everyone "who is alive and believes" in Jesus, "shall not die forever" (Jn 11:25-26); both present the two moments of death-judgment and final resurrection in such a way that they leave aside a hypothetical "intermediate state", an idea that "seems idle" [1217] . Here Balthasar also quotes J. Ratzinger : "The question of an intermediate situation between death and resurrection [...], does not even arise, precisely because the I of Jesus *is* the resurrection and, consequently, faith, which means the contact between Jesus and I, operates here and now the crossing of the line of death" [1218] . This is why Balthasar criticizes the evolution of systematic theology that has arrived at "a doctrine of the 'intermediate state'" that makes it "postulate for man two judgments: a particular one after death, and a universal one at the end of the world". This, besides seeming to him a "fatal situation", he considers it clearly "unfeasible both biblically and speculatively", as [1219] has just proved.

The consequence of all this is that - theologically - one must hold "firm to the idea of a single judgment", which is certainly of a personal-individual character and which takes place immediately after death (Benedict XII , *Benedictus Deus*, in 1336), and, therefore, must take place while worldly time is still passing. But then, that is perfectly thinkable equally for the resurrection of the flesh. Indeed, in spite of the fact that the New Testament makes use of "an abundance of OT plastic material" -which grants the judgment a final communal character-,

both for Paul and for the Synoptics it is most clearly an *individual* judgment, where each one is judged according to his own individual works, which cannot be other than "the active repercussions of his faith that he loves" [1220] . "Consequently, for the individual that final judgment takes place after his death, which requires (to quote Karl Rahner's felicitous formula) "that it takes place 'throughout'" the temporal history of the world and thus coincides 'with the sum of the particular judgments of concrete persons' [1221] " [1222] . Now, if this is said for the particular judgment after death, "one cannot understand why the same could not be said also of the resurrection, especially if one does not lose sight of Mt 27:51-53. Therefore, death, judgment and resurrection occur immediately after death - while the history of the world continues to move forward in its temporality - simply "because the Messiah, who calls himself the resurrection and the life, has already appeared in history and, dying, has come to the end of the world"; and in this way, we know through faith, that the resurrection of the dead "has already begun in his resurrection and in those who have risen with him" (1223) .

Once again, Balthasar, on the basis of the biblical testimonies, raises the need to be coherent with the eschatological data that appear there, which makes unnecessary the proposal of a hypothetical intermediate state -or of a double judgment-, which, in spite of how widespread it is in catechesis and theology, seems to him that it does not respond to the most plausible Christian teaching. Eschatological doctrine - and in particular the theme of the (single) judgment - must be elaborated from the fundamental eschatological criterion, that is, that the resurrection of Christ is *the hermeneutical criterion* for all eschatological statements. Thus, the fact that for Christ the end of the world and the resurrection - with its salvific judgment on all men - has already arrived (*in the midst* of history), tells us explicitly that the arrival of the definitive, both for Christ *and for those who are with him*, is perfectly compatible with a continuation of the temporal history of the world for all of us who are still within history.

Finally, we are left with the question of purgatory. For Balthasar, it is clear that "what Catholic theology calls purification in the hereafter must necessarily be seen as an aspect of judgment." If there is a single judgment that has an eschatological character and includes-as a whole-all the individual judgments, then, following Paul, it can be said that that *Day* "will be revealed by fire," where "the fire will test the quality of each one's work," "and if one's work is burned up, he will suffer punishment," although he himself "will be saved, though as one who escapes the fire" (1 Cor 3:13-15; cf. Is 66:15-16). This means that at the moment of judgment-immediately after his death-when the human being enters the definitive space, not only will the quality (or not) of his works become evident, but he will also be introduced into a kind of fire, of an equally eschatological character - which is nothing other than the very "majesty of God who reveals himself" - and which, in an "'instant'" (*Augenblick*) - which "escapes earthly

measures of time" (Ratzinger [1224])- will purify him of all his impurities [1225] . That is purgatory, which obviously is not a "place", but neither is it a "state", but much more exactly, it is an "encounter of the sinner not yet purified with the *Kyrios* who appears to him for judgment" [1226] . And according to what he has already said about the experience of the Son on Holy Saturday, we know that purgatory thus understood has arisen "when the Son, with his passage through 'hell', inserts in the state of the lost precisely the aspect of compassion", that is, "purgatory has its origin in the cross" and in the mercy of God, in such a way that it is founded in Christ himself [1227] . In this way, the purifying fire -which has its origin in this Christological foundation-, when it encounters the sinner -also founded in Christ from creation-, examines him, purifies him and leaves him fit to look at his foundation with a clean heart. There is no longer any room for explanation or justification, there is only room to look at the distance between what the sinner is and what he should have been, to recognize his own impurity and let it burn, so that, from then on, there is only room to trust with infinite hope and to recognize that his punishment should have been even greater. Henceforth, therefore, life will be only gratitude, like that of a son who has now been begotten for eternity. This origin of purgatory - it is worth remembering - is based, among other sources, also on the work of Adrienne von Speyr .

Criticisms that Balthasar has received regarding his hope in the salvation of everyone

Before referring to the polemics that arose at the end of his life, it is necessary to remember that Balthasar showed interest in this topic already from his doctoral thesis, whose title was precisely *History of the eschatological problem in modern German literature* [1228] , and then during his life we can find about 40 contributions on eschatology [1229] . Undoubtedly the influence of Origen and K. Barth were important, each in their own way -respectively- proposing either a universal reconciliation of the cosmos (including all human and angelic beings), or the death of Christ -in our place- precisely so that no person would be lost in the course of history. And certainly central was the "Holy Saturday" experience of Adrienne von Speyr -which Balthasar knew so closely-, where Christ is recognized descending into hell to suffer our punishment and abandonment in hell [1230] . But his reflections on "the last act" are an elaboration that he, throughout his life, has kept so central to his thinking that they cannot simply be attributed to the influence of others - with the obvious exception of some elements that clearly come from Adrienne von Speyr -. For example, we see some elements already present in his 1944 work, *The Heart of the World* [1231] ; then in the 1950s he planned a publication entitled *Eschatology in Our Time* [1232] ; in 1957 he wrote a contribution entitled *Eschatology*, for a volume on the "questions of theology today" [1233] ; and in 1969 he published

his famous text *Theology of the Three Days. The Paschal Mystery* [1234] , with a finished reflection on the theme of Holy Saturday and the descent of Jesus into hell. However, as in other themes, Balthasar will deliver a definitive and complete synthesis on the last things in his great *Trilogy*. Indeed, in *Theodramatics* V, he will develop his view of eschatology from a Trinitarian point of view, which is the place from where the ultimate things can be truly understood, and it will also be the moment to - as he explicitly said - make some conjectures of possible things; and he stresses it: simply *possible*. Any unprejudiced reader can perceive this, and this is what we have wanted to express in the previous pages.

However, for reasons that we could almost call fortuitous, Balthasar was confronted with a certain misunderstanding on this subject in the last years of his life. Indeed, an interview at the exit of the ceremony for the reception of the Paul VI International Award (June 23, 1984), which unfortunately - as often happens - was taken out of context, meant that the phrase - theologically correct as a possibility - "hell exists, but no one can say who or how many are there, it could even be empty", ended up appearing in a headline as "hell is empty" [1235] . And from there the opinion spread that he would maintain, as a theological datum, the non-existence of the damned (or of hell), something that is not at all fair with his thought -much more refined and nuanced-, as we have seen. However, this polemic was a good occasion for him to make his thinking on this particular point even more explicit, which probably also made him appear to be overemphasizing the subject - without it being considered that the reason for such insistence had been the misinterpretation of his words and the harsh criticism received for this very reason [1236] -, and moreover, at the end of his life, almost as if they were his testamentary words. There are about five articles in which he clarifies this mistake and punctuates his thought, showing his patristic sources and their harmony with the tradition of the Church, and clearly distinguishing the Christian doctrine from those conjectures possible to make -but always conjectures-, based on a hope that is not only theologically correct, but that is a Christian requirement. And, moreover, he specifies and puts in context the thought of Augustine on this subject, warning against an uncritical reading of this Father of the Church who, in spite of "the fact that the world owes him so much, did not set the limits foreseen in the Gospel" and, with his harshest phrases, "gives us to understand that he knows the result of divine judgment" [1237] . Among these last texts, the following are especially important: *On the question: 'Hope for all'. A response to Karl Besler's article* (1986) [1238] *; What can we hope for?* (1986) [1239] *; A Short Discourse on Hell* (1987) [1240] ; and *Apokatastasis* (1988) [1241] , in which he responds clearly to some articles that criticized his views [1242] and to "a series of injurious letters and conjurations calling for a return to the true faith" [1243] .

In these articles, along with refuting his contradictors, he shows the misinterpretation of

which he has been a victim:

> My words have always been misinterpreted as if they were saying that he who trusts that all his brothers and sisters will be saved, "trusts in an empty hell" (what an expression!). Or in the sense that those who express this hope are teaching the doctrine of "apokatastasis" (universal salvation), condemned by the Church, which I have expressly rejected: we are all before the tribunal of God and we have neither the right nor the possibility of seeing the judge beforehand. How is it possible to identify hope with knowing? [1244]

In all this polemic Balthasar clearly reaffirms the same thing that can be read in a large part of his previous texts: his conviction that it is perfectly consistent with biblical teaching and the tradition of the Church that, based on the intrinsic mercy of God and the universality of the redemption brought about by Christ, the Christian can not only hope, but has the *duty* to hope that this salvation can effectively reach all the people of the world, thanks to the infinite mercy and salvation that God has offered us and, thus, all can attain eternal beatitude [1245] . And for Balthasar, this conviction is even more coherent with Christian thought than the idea that "we can only speak seriously about hell if we affirm with all certainty that there are in it men condemned for all eternity" [1246] or, even more, those affirmations that hell is certainly full of people.

It seems unquestionable to me that Balthasar's words -beyond the journalistic title mentioned- are clear and adjusted as far as this subject is concerned. Another thing is that one may or may not agree with his affirmations, or be more in favor of one or another opinion, but none of this prevents one from affirming that on this point Balthasar remains perfectly within Catholic theology. In fact, he himself is at pains to demonstrate that his theology was born fundamentally from his encounter with the Greek Fathers - Origen , Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor [1247] -, is in tune with the great medieval and modern mystical tradition - Mechthild von Hackerborn, Angela of Foligno, Julian of Norwich, Therese of Lisieux and Edith Stein, among others [1248] -, and is in agreement with a significant number of contemporary theologians -J. Ratzinger , K. Rahner , H. de Lubac , W. Kasper , G. Greshake, among many others he cites [1249] -. And, although Adrienne von Speyr -in her theology- holds exactly the same -and from which he uses many quotations, especially in *Theodramatics* V-, this thought was already elaborated in Balthasar "long before [his] encounter with Adrienne von Speyr , whose theology of Good Friday (Christ's descent into hell)", by the way, has also "been condemned by [his] critics in a radical way" [1250] . The essential point of this cloud of witnesses - which is what interests Balthasar as support for his reflections - is that both theologians and mystics, have the theological conviction that when speaking of Jesus as judge, "judgment appears at the same time under the aspect of hope (Ratzinger)" [1251] , and, moreover, many of the mystics have offered their lives with such love and hope that, if only it

were capable of lessening - if not ending - the sufferings that the condemned would have to undergo. All are under a hope that is clearly biblical and that should not and cannot disappoint. That is the neuralgic point of this whole discussion. And Balthasar is right when he emphasizes what is truly central: the hope that God with his mercy can really triumph over our sins and our weakness. And this, far from making life easy and sin unserious, on the contrary, only reaffirms love and the search for justice in human beings, because, as he himself says, dogmatics cannot "set the divine attributes against each other in such a way that one could speak of a justice unrelated to mercy. This would mean limiting the mercy" of God (1252) .

If we recognize and adequately value in Balthasar this fundamental theological conviction - coherent with Catholic dogmatics-, then we can discuss or disagree, openly or more subtly, about his conjectures. They may be considered adequate or not, they may be assumed to be consistent with biblical and theological thought or less so. But whether we find them satisfactory or, on the contrary, misguided, we must never forget the irrecusable fact of what they effectively are: *conjectures*, attempts to understand - or to grope towards - subjects that are certainly beyond our rational possibilities - although very often theology and, above all, pictorialism, has treated them as if they were perfectly describable things; and, therefore, we can only sketch mutually contradictory phrases, which only in God himself can ineffably find their unity. And it is very important and honest with Balthasar not to confuse his theological affirmations with conjectures that try to understand something about the final act. In the end, if hope in God's ultimate success is demanded by faith in the merciful God, how we can imagine ultimate realities, on the other hand, is left open to our rational possibilities.

In this context, it seems to me that what Balthasar has done is commendable and provides new points of view [1253] . But, above all, it introduces an important criticism of a statement that was considered irrefutable and yet was *also* only a theological conjecture, and that Balthasar, like many contemporary theologians, has raised a serious objection to. Only that, unlike others, our theologian has ventured into a reflection and explanation that could unify and harmonize elements and affirmations that are not at all easy to unify; for which he has had to resort again to the plasticity of a narrative and mystical theology that, precisely for this reason, has given him new tools and has opened a path to follow, but also for this very reason, this path also presents itself as his limitation. It seems to me that, in synthesis, one must remain with a fundamental point of Balthasar: the duty to hope in the triumph of God's mercy and the hermeneutical awareness that eschatological affirmations must always be under the Christological criterion and must be thought of in a supra-temporal category, things that have not always been duly taken into account.

The end as a return to God

Balthasar ends his *Theodramática* reflecting, in more than one hundred pages, on how to understand our eternal life -absolute- in God. Three great themes bring us closer -always fragmentarily- to what our eternity with God can be. In this third part of his *Theodramatics* V, which he calls *The World in God*, he considers, first of all, what it can mean and how the fact that the created can be incorporated into God, the Uncreated One, can be realized. He then reviews how the long ecclesial tradition has understood our participation in the eternal life of God with various images. He concludes by affirming that nothing we can think or experience can take away the character of mystery from our definitive incorporation into God, which is possible only because God is Trinity.

Incorporation of the created into the uncreated

For Balthasar, the difficulty - or impossibility - of "giving a complete concept of *theologia comprehensorum*" - the knowledge of God possessed by those who already enjoy eternal bliss and are united in embrace with Him - is evident, "that is why modern theological thought has largely given up on elaborating this final component of all theology" (1254) :

> The only place from which we can glimpse something of the absolute future of man and humanity is the resurrection of the Crucified One, who, with his Trinitarian existence, makes the possibility of a reception of the historical and finite world into the eternal, infinite event of God appear credible to us, and gives us in his "Forty Days" and in his sending of the Spirit something like a foretaste of a taste of what will be the definitive salvation of man (1255) .

Reaffirming here the hermeneutical criterion that has accompanied all his eschatological reflection, that is, that the ultimate things must always be understood and interpreted from what happened with Jesus and, in particular, from his resurrection; He repeats that whatever we might say or think with respect to the eternal life of the human being in God, can only be thought of from what happened in Christ with his return to the Father, not only because there we see a creature - humanity in Jesus - resurrected and at the right hand of the Father, but also because nothing that happens to us can be apart from what happened in Christ. In him and only in him do we have access to the Father.

Now, it is important to consider the essential reason that allows for this incorporation of the human being into God. He has mentioned it throughout his work as one of his most recurrent themes: everything has been created *in Christ;* and the human being-and in him everything created-"exists with a view to the resurrection" as the final goal of his entire existence. Indeed, since Christ has made resurrection possible for all human beings, nothing created will be lost in the hereafter; on the contrary, it is precisely there that it will find its full meaning.

Everything has Christological meaning. The behavior of the Risen One with his disciples "makes it absolutely clear that nothing of the intimacy of the earth is lost or alienated in God [...], that, rather, everything that has been remains present in the transfiguration and only here acquires its ultimate meaning" [1256] . Three theological arguments make this essential reason explicit.

1. *Existing in Christ.* Balthasar, in dealing with the scenario in which God's drama with man unfolds, commenting on Gen 1:1 - "God created heaven and earth"-, had affirmed that "in the biblical sense heaven means 'the place in the world *from* which God acts in favor of man, for him and with him... in order to really come to *meet* man'". That meant to indicate that, in creating the world, God "created" also a "place" from which he himself could act and relate to the creature. "'Without the *distance* thus established' there would be no communication, no dialogue and therefore also 'no drama between God and man'" [1257] . In this way, "the fact that God has liberated the earthly reality from himself, so that it returns to him starting from a movement of its own, shows that in God there is room for this earthly" [1258] . In the line of the Plotinian *exitus-reditus* [= exit-return] - Christianized by Dionysius and later made classical by Thomas -, Balthasar understands creation as an exit from God, and eschatology as the final return of everything created to God. But this departure from God and this return to him took place in a consummate and complete way - once and for all and for all - "in Christ, who, as Eternal, lives an earthly life and fills it with eternity so that, returning to the Father in heaven, he may welcome into eternity the life lived in an earthly way. He is the concrete exchange" [1259] . The return of Jesus to the Father "can be understood as the creation of heaven, that is, [as the creation] of a new dimension of this work of God, in which man and the old creation begin to be transformed: they begin to reach God" [1260] . That is what the theology of the body of Christ (Paul) means: for human beings, to be in God means to be *in* Christ. Heaven is being one in Christ (Eph 1:10).

As can be expected, all this has a clearly Trinitarian foundation. The heavenly dwelling places (Jn 14:2-3) are certainly not a place locatable in our world, but neither is it a place "beyond" this one. There is no "place" in the "beyond". As Albertus Magnus says , "no created or bodily place can enclose the Trinity. Therefore, the heaven of the Trinity is not something created or physical, but the Trinity itself" [1261] . It is simply the complete transformation of all that is mortal and corporeal-thanks to Christ's resurrection-in a way that is essentially Trinitarian; for, in Christ, all die and receive the Spirit that transforms them into the Son, whereby they can look to the Father. In other words, participation in the same destiny of Christ makes us contemplate the unfathomable root of God's love in the generation of the Son, but grants us not only to contemplate it, but also to participate in it, as we will show in a few

moments.

2. *To conform ourselves to the creative project we have received.* Following John Scotus Eriugena, Balthasar recognizes a second motive: "God wants us - who always fail and fall to a greater or lesser extent on earth - to finally be conformed to the idea that he has of us" [1262] . Our author has also said that God always looks at us with a double gaze: he looks at us lovingly and accepts us as we are at present (with all our frailties); but at the same time, he looks at us lovingly and hopefully in his Son, as he ardently desires us to become, that is, fully configured to Christ. This double and loving gaze is based on what we have already said about the freedom of the human being. Having been created under the archetype of Christ, it is not possible for him to leave us completely "outside" of himself, since we were created precisely *in* him and as *his* image. God "cannot liberate finite freedom in such a way that the deepest part of it does not remain within him: its emergence from divine freedom and its turning to it in order to be radically fulfilled. Our freedom is consigned in the word of God [...] and, with it, also our true self". It is what Thomas has called *syneidesis* or *synderesis,* which is like that "spark" within the human being that makes him be unrenounceably "subject to the principles of good" [1263] . Beyond all the difficulties of the human being to discover and follow the good, we cannot forget that his very structure of knowledge is marked by the search for what he considers his good and the good as such. And that spark comes from God, who has created him and has left him structured from the divine and eternal good and with the purpose of seeking the good for his life.

Now, the content of this *idea* that God has of us and that he has left stamped on the basic structure of our creaturely being consists of two things. The first thing is clear: the world has been "designed and created in Christ," so that "our idea is 'in Christ'" [1264] . Therefore, when the incarnate Logos came into the world, we were able to know the idea that God has of each one of us, starting from the existence and the word of the Word made flesh. For God wants to find in us those creatures "to be found in his begotten Son" [1265] . The second is a consequence of the first: according to what we have said - in speaking of Christology - about the unity of person (procession) and mission in Christ, the content of "our" idea thought by God is "necessarily the idea of our sending (or of our charism) within the economy of the universal redemptive body of Christ". This means that, when we were created - indeed, when we have been "thought" from all eternity - "what else could God's idea of the individual be but the determination of what he is to be (and to accomplish) in Christ", that is, his mission? [1266] . The idea that God has (and has always had) of us is our own vocation or mission, which is also what characterizes our personal being. And since in the deepest sense there is only one mission or sending - that of the Son - since there is only one eternal generation - that of the

Son - then, in human creation, every mission, every sending and every human task springs from God's plan, which is eternal. And for this very reason, everything also tends to him, since his existence coincides (in a created way) with the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit. In the act of generation of the Son, as an expression of love, is included every creative act of God, who now in the Son also places a created other before himself in order to let him be and love him in an endless relationship. Therefore, "if the sending is the true nucleus of the personality, then this, because it proceeds from eternity and is directed to it, opens beyond the format conscious worldly for him or thought by others," since it is eternal and originates in God himself. "Therefore, a sending initiated on earth, if it truly proceeds from Christ, is not broken by death, but is consummated in eternal life" [1267] . Balthasar graphs all this with beautiful words of Adrienne von Speyr:

> [Ultimately there is only one sending: that of the Son;] in origin and acceptance every subsequent sending lives from the first [...] The Son grants to everyone who follows him participation in the divine substance, in the same direction and unlimited character as his eternal sending.... Even if God intends to achieve in a sending something special and finite, nevertheless, he grants to each one the same sending, the sending of the movement, of the following, and only within that gift the determined objective. What is to be attained remains something like a point within the universal sending. [Christ calls man to a sending] at the point where he has received his from the Father. It is like a spring of sending: an unceasing gushing forth from the central fountain. And because the Son wants each sending to serve the glorification of the Father, he causes the sendings not to join peripherally with his own, but to proceed centrally from his own center (1268) .

3. *Final transformation.* According to the above and knowing that the world cannot be "outside" God because there is nothing that is outside God, then this "going out from" and "returning to" God must always take place within intra-Trinitarian relations. "Therefore, it cannot be a movement of the world from an 'outside of God' to an 'inside of God,' but a mutation of the state of the world within its immutable proximity to God and immanence in him." In fact, God has given his own freedom to every human creature and, therefore, has left him freedom in "the choice of the good, which he himself is not, but which is perennially inscribed on him" [1269] . For this reason, each human being, in his temporal and historical course, responds to this challenge and thus gradually approaches God, starting from his freedom, until the last day of his life. Thus, one cannot properly speak of a "physical" distance between heaven and earth, but rather of two moments of freedom: earth would be "the state of pilgrim freedom and heaven that of its definitiveness as confirmation of its basic positive choice" by God, "who can now give himself to it in a totally evident way. And that surrender of God to the creature is to be understood not as a vision or an act of understanding on the part of the creature, but rather as the surrender of infinite being itself, "which is at the same

time infinite freedom, which is conceivable only as the opening of infinitely incommensurable spaces" and which is "a supreme presentiality of that which is beyond all comprehensibility" [1270] . To know God is, at the same time, to contemplate and to travel, but where one never finishes traveling. And this welcoming of the finite creature on the part of infinite freedom can only be an assimilation of the finite into the infinite - always more perfect - in such a way that it transforms the one who is assimilated into that which assimilates him, that is, he too becomes source and word, son in the Son, without losing anything of his own personal identity. But none of this is possible to imagine. Although we must affirm that nothing that is positive in the creature will be absorbed by the positivity of the pure Act, since the Trinitarian God pre-contains all created positivity and, therefore, can make it come out of himself and, then, gather it without harming it and, even more, plenifying it. God is the unfathomable background of all freedom and everything that he brings forth was in some way already pre-contained in the generation of the Son, which is a permanent happening.

Participation in Trinitarian life and events

Balthasar often insists that eternal life together with God

> cannot consist of a simple "vision" of God: first, because God is not an object, but a life that happens eternally always-now; second, because the creature must live definitively not in front of God, but interiorly in God; third, because Scripture already assigns us in this life a participation, veiled under the cover of faith, in the intradivine life [(1271)] .

It is not easy to imagine what our eternal life with God will be like, but we can affirm at least two things: that eternal life means an incorporation of each of the blessed into God and, in this incorporation, it implies a participation in the divine life itself. This has been understood and illustrated with different concepts and images throughout history. Balthasar collects here four examples that, read as a whole, help to get an idea, however meager, of what eternal life can be.

Birth of God. Sacred Scripture attributes to human beings, already in this life, a mysterious participation in the inner divine life: in the generation of the Son and in the procession of the Holy Spirit. In fact, for Paul, the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, cries out within us: "Abba" (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15), that is, he pronounces the words of the Son himself. "The amazing thing is that the Spirit sent within us utters the cry of the Son and thereby testifies to our co-affiliation with the eternal Son" [1272] . So, we have been incorporated into the very generation of the Son: we are being generated in the Son, we are being authentically sons of the Father. John, for his part, speaks of our being re-begotten, that, by reason of the redemption, we are born again of God. In fact, also for Johannine theology, the indwelling of the Trinity in us is, in reality, a true being born again, which makes us equal to God; obviously, not to his

essence, but to his personal exchange of love between persons, that is, it means entering into the intimacy of his relationship of Trinitarian love.

> Therefore, it is not enough to describe the life of grace by means of a "presence" and "indwelling" of the Persons of the Son and of the Spirit sent by the Father to the souls of the graced. The purpose of this indwelling is to make man participate in the relations of the Persons, which are wholly and entirely relations (1273) .

This biblical theology has been later deepened by mystical theology, with new approaches that describe such participation in the intra-divine life with very powerful words, which - in the case of John of the Cross - in his time made even the Inquisition itself uneasy. Once again we see that Balthasar's theology has methodologically incorporated mystical experience and theology.

2. *Co-spiration of the Spirit.* John of the Cross affirmed that when God touches the soul -as a flame that consumes and transforms everything it touches-, that soul remains without its own form, to assume then the form of the same flame that burns it; transforming itself into radiant splendor that begins to burn together with the Spirit. Thus, the creature is divinized, since the works of God are God himself: "as a shadow, the soul remains distinct from God, but as a shadow projected and illuminated by the light, it is not only the creature made by God, but divinized by him" 1274 . And he quotes John of the Cross : "The substance of this soul-though it is not the substance of God, because it cannot substantially become him, but, being united as it is here with him and likewise absorbed in him-is God by participation in God" 1275 . All this is possible then by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the creature, which completely transforms - without destroying it - the human will into the will of God and, "thus, the spiration of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son becomes also a spiration of the soul". Indeed - and this is the great idea of John of the Cross - the Holy Spirit enables the soul to work - in God - the same spiration of love that the Father and the Son work together. The soul becomes God in God - by participation - and breathes out with the same inspiration of God through participation 1276 . In the Son, *we* also "breathe out" the Holy Spirit as love. This profound and stupendous reflection maximizes the fact of our incorporation in the Trinitarian event and of our identification with God, while at the same time maintaining our unique identity untouchable as such; and it is based on the fact "that the Holy Spirit is conferred on Christians not for themselves as a static and private property, but as something that has repercussions for the good of the community" 1277 . This is what it means to be in God and to be one in God or, in other words, to be fully divinized in eternity.

3. *Birth of the Son.* Flemish-Renaissance mysticism-whose great masters, whom Balthasar mentions, are Eckhart, Tauler, Seuse and Ruysbroeck-based on the new birth of which Jesus

spoke to Nicodemus-understands that "the grace given to us is essentially a reception as sons in the eternal Son (Rom 8:13-17)" and, consequently, a "'rebirth to the eternal Son, understands that "the grace given to us is essentially a reception as sons in the eternal Son (Rom 8:13-17)" and, therefore, a "'rebirth from above' from the bosom of the Father (Jn 3:3-6) and, through this entrance, participation in the Trinitarian life of God" [1278] . Then, these authors, starting from an "extremely neoplatonic ontology", but "chosen to express genuinely Christian ideas" [1279] , ontologically base their reflection on the conviction that "the act of the creature is the pure reception of the divine gift of being" "and in the reception the immediate return of all being to God" (Eckhart) [1280] . And, this idea of receiving the creaturely gift of being and giving it back to God is combined with the Trinitarian concept of the eternal generation of the Word as the reception of the divinity by the Son and its return to the Father. Thus, in Eckhart - his great initiator - as "God the Father begets in a single act his eternal Son and creation" (for in that act of generation God gives everything and therein is contained everything that can arise), which [= creation] "has [therefore] its true reality more in the Son than in itself." then it can be said both that "the Father generates us in his Son", and that "God begets his Son within us" [1281] , "since the world is co-generated in the generation of the Son" [1282] . But, in this pioneer author we arrive, in reality, "at an identification of the begetting by grace of the Son [within the human being] with the intradivine begetting", lacking a true *analogia entis* and "an authentic distance between the divine begetting or generating and the possibility (given to the creature by the grace of God) of the configuration of the Son [in the creature] by himself and in himself and in God" [1283] , that is, of the begetting by grace of God to the Son in the creature.

For this reason, his successors, while maintaining the correct idea of the "unity" of divine generation and creation, nevertheless corrected it of its ambiguities and "Christianized" it on the basis of the *imitation* of Christ by the creature. For Tauler, for example, the disciple must "co-descend and co-die with Christ" "so that Christ is truly begotten and thus God in him" and thus "man reaches his consummation" [1284] . And Ruysbroeck, thinking of the creature from the Trinity, affirms that the Father, "generating a single Word in which he expresses himself and everything, contemplates in the Generated One the personal otherness of the Son and *in this* the creatural otherness of the world that he is to create". In other words, God contemplates "the non-identity of the creatable world within the Son, identical to him as God". Thanks, then, to the eternal generation of the Son "all creatures have come forth eternally before they were created in time" [1285] . Now, on the basis of this theology - which in these last authors has already been well founded philosophically and theologically - it is well understood that the creature can truly participate in all this divine event of the generation of

the Son (because the Father configures-generates his Son in it), but "only through the grace of God and in the following of the Son" [1286] . "God begets his Son in the apex of the soul" [1287] and the human being can perceive that profound contact with God - that being generated by God - even if he does not have sufficient strength to follow him to the bottom, and then he becomes an eternal and tireless seeker and longing for God.

4. *Ecclesial anticipation.* A final way of understanding eternal life was to project it as the full consummation of what already occurs during the earthly pilgrimage of Christian life and, above all, of ecclesial participation. So, if the so-called "beatific vision" is simply the "consummation of what began in the incarnation of the Logos [which is the root of all Christian and ecclesial life], it can only be participation in the vital event of God" [1288] . Patristics was well aware of this and expressed it clearly in "the motif of the Church and its archetype Mary" [1289] . Two aspects were united:

> While Mary gives birth to the Head of the Church, the latter begets at the baptismal font the members of the Head who, incorporated into him, are "mystically" the Logos himself. But insofar as these members together form the Church and the individuals realize in themselves ever more perfectly the essence of her, they in turn beget, from themselves, Christ (1290) .

In fact, at every moment the Church is generating "from her heart the Logos" (Hippolytus) [1291] by water and the Spirit and then accompanying believers in their growth and education as members of that same Church, according to the Logos and in the Holy Spirit. And "it is [precisely] the Holy Spirit who carries out in us the divine work of grace, just as in another time, covering the holy Virgin with his shadow, he formed the body of the Logos incarnate" (Cyril of Alexandria) [1292] . In this way the Logos grows daily in the Church, fully forming the *anima ecclesiastica (*Gregory of Nyssa) that, "in the measure in which man is divinized, in that same measure God is humanized" and thus "the incarnation of the Logos is consummated" [1293] . It is clear then how the Christian life is an anticipation, a pregustation and a prophecy of eternity.

The same has been expressed with various images that wish to apprehend a reality that, in truth, is incomprehensible to us. Two images are central because they "depict heaven as a super-realization of the intimate-human in a totally different intimacy with God: the images of the banquet and the wedding" [1294] . They speak of a reciprocal intimacy between God and the human being, which will be expressed in a supreme and sacramental way in the Eucharist, as the given body of the Son, which is precisely banquet and communion. The Eucharist is God's gift to the world, a gift that is Trinitarian, since "it is the Father who gives to the world, through the unifying mediation of the Spirit, the body of his Son, thus seasoned by divine love" [1295] . This also reveals the Trinitarian law that each person causes the other to emerge

through his own self-giving.

And so we arrive at the conclusive concept, which can be none other than the *communio sanctorum,* which is illuminated by the participation of every human being in the Trinitarian processions:

> The *circuminsessio* [= mutual interiority] of the divine hypostases and their total being in reciprocity constitute the archetype which, however, is always procured through what was on earth the sacrament of *Communio, the* surrender of the body of the Son by the Father in the Holy Spirit, a surrender which now emerges from its sacramental veiling into its patent truth. Also this surrender remains eternally as an archetype, the economic face of the intratrinitarian (1296) .

Thus, the consummate and definitive form of *communio*, insofar as mutual openness to one another, refers "to the unique freedom of the divine essence," which is in the possession of the divine hypostases, in such a way that the divine will is also the result of the integration of the "desires" of each of these hypostases. Thus also the freedom created and given to each of the creatures, incorporated in the eternal freedom of the Son, will be marvelously adapted to the only Trinitarian freedom and decision shared by the hypostases. We could not speak then of an "absorption" of created freedom - much less of a destruction or damage - but, on the contrary, of a gift of God to them, in such a way that each freedom will preserve its own tonality in full communion with all. All will be given to one another and to God, in such a way that no one will lose his or her own and each will be fulfilled in the absolute, which is God, living also in an eternal surprise of love.

"If you understand that, then that's not God."

At the end of this chapter, it is essential to recall a basic affirmation of faith, which reminds us that Jesus is an ineffable mystery because of the Trinitarian reality that surrounds him, since he is the manifestation of the Father and is led by the Holy Spirit. In fact, "the 'figure' of Jesus as the central actor in the theodrama cannot be grasped except by renouncing to grasp it, by letting it hide in the ungraspable of the Trinitarian mystery" [1297] . Mystery that is revealed to the maximum "in the supreme concealment on the cross," when the Father abandons the Son, revealing "to the maximum" "his love for the world" [1298] . And this mystery, which does not simply mean that we cannot understand it with our reason, but rather points to the greatness of a God who surpasses us in every way, a mystery that also continues in the life of Christians - as we are indwelt by the Spirit and made one in the Son - and reaches its culmination with our full entrance into the Trinity in eschatology. Now, this immense mystery finds its *verisimilitude* only when someone "believes that 'the Logos was in the beginning in God and that he was God' [Jn 1:1], that this Logos is the immemorial

generation of the Father, and that he proceeds from the Father and from him, and that from the Father and from him proceeds the Spirit of free love, [and then] such a one must admit that the essence of the Logos cannot be something subsequent to a first preceding divine foundation", but that he who sees the Son, sees the Father (Jn 14:9) (1299) .

Knowing, then, that we are faced with realities that we must approach with great care and respect, Balthasar asks himself what "the whole work of creation and redemption" can mean for God. In reality, "the ultimate goal of creation" 1300 can only be understood if we take into account two essential aspects that we have reviewed throughout this work: on the one hand, the "extreme gratuitousness of the essential intradivine processions" and, on the other hand, the "inclusion of the creature in the mutual intradivine testimonies of love"; "so that each divine person who cooperates in the work of creation intends thereby to increase the 'glory' of the other persons" (in the sense of recognizing his permanent love and eternal self-giving). In this way, we can say that the work of creation is not something simply superfluous for God - which would add nothing to him - since creation (and the redemption that is united to it) - as the divine mission of the Son and the Spirit -, being incorporated and grounded in the divine processions and in his infinite gratuitousness, also participates in the Trinitarian life - in a mysterious but internal way - and "becomes an interior gift of each divine person to the others," thus acquiring an eternal value that - mysteriously - adds nothing to God, but - just as mysteriously - is not superfluous to God either 1301 .

This is a very adequate way of understanding this sublime mystery, and which also allows us to overcome "the apparent aporia according to which either God is all being, and then the world adds nothing to it", "or, if the world has an authentic being, God cannot be the fullness of being" 1302 , since God and the world do not add up as two independent quantities, and much less in the case of God, as if he were quantifiable. God, in his absolute freedom and without any why, but simply from his permanent self-communication - which is his own necessity - causes "the infinite possibilities of divine freedom to be found *within* the Trinitarian differences, so that they are free possibilities within an eternal life of God's love always realized" (1303) :

> In the absolutely free position of the Son as God by the divine Father, the "idea" of creation up to the cross is thus included as realizable and as already gathered in the divine life, and already "surpassed" in the absolute gratuitousness of Trinitarian freedom and vitality (1304) .

Basically, if in God, eternally, the Father impoverishes himself (by giving all his divinity) by giving himself totally to the Son, and then allows himself to be given as a gift by the Son (who gives him back and thus shares all that divinity); then, when the created economy - by absolute grace of God - is incorporated into the Trinitarian life, there is no reason why it should not be worth the same thing now: that within the infinite richness and possibilities of

God is also to allow himself to be enriched ('given') by his creature (who is the image of his Son and is contained in his Son) without, for that reason, ever ceasing to be absolute and totally full. This is the great mystery of the Trinity, which is eternal richness and eternal poverty, as we have seen in due course. Only because God is infinite and eternal richness in his being love - that is, self-giving - and eternal and infinite poverty - letting himself be generated and proceed through love - can he also be truly and eternally love that is given and received, and we can authentically participate in him.

In short, "the possibility of the inclusion of a non-divine world in Trinitarian love has been present from all eternity in the divine dialogue," since the possibility of "the creation of a finite freedom" is implied in that dialogue. And, therefore, also the eventual distancing of the creature from God and, then, the overcoming of this same distancing, were also always taken into account in the divine dialogue, since in this divine dialogue is contained a kind of renunciation of self on the part of the Father in order to welcome the other and, also, to go out in search of him when he has distanced himself. And this is possible because the divine, infinite and eternal life is not something closed, but an uninterrupted and always new vitality, which certainly is not an alteration in God, but it does allow him in an ineffable way to recover and welcome the creature, without ceasing for that reason to be eternal God [1305] . This is explained, ultimately, because the kenosis of the Son - the external expression of divine generation - does not imply ceasing to be God, but expresses in the "exterior" of the economy what has been and continues to be, at the same time, in the "interior" of the Trinity: the manifestation of the kenosis of the Father and his full availability to fulfill the will of the Father. All this makes us see that the work of the economy - of the theodrama of God with the human being - in some way also "enriches" God, without adding anything to him that he lacks [1306] . Thus the supreme activity of love is manifested. Then, finally, "what does God get from the world?" [1307] Balthasar's answer is his last words in his entire *Theodramatics:*

> An added gift that the Father makes to the Son, but equally the Son to the Father and the Holy Spirit to both, a gift because the world receives an inner participation in the exchange of divine life through the diverse operation of each of the three persons, and therefore restores to God what it has received from God as divine together with the gift of its own creaturely condition also as a divine gift (1308) .

Overall appraisal

We have now completed the review of Balthasar's most relevant theological contributions, which have meant nine chapters with the central aspects of his entire *Trilogy,* as a work of synthesis of all his thought. Throughout these pages, we have always understood the basic structure of his theological proposal, which he himself has called "the heart of his thought" [1309] , that is, the presentation of "the traditional treatises or theological *loci*" from a structure based on the transcendentals of being: beauty, goodness and truth [1310] . This is the structuring axis of his theological thought presented here, and, therefore, the other (particular) aspects of his theology must be understood from there, and it is the basic and indispensable context for its correct interpretation. For all these reasons, at the end of this work it seems appropriate to attempt a global appreciation of the *Trilogy* -as such-, in order to ponder even better all that has been said, and to present some central aspects of the work, as a whole. This is neither a summary nor conclusions. Rather, they are some clues that may help us to better understand this author -in his own texts- and to underline some of his more general contributions, since the more particular things were duly highlighted, or discerned, or eventually criticized, in the pertinent chapters.

A. From this global perspective, we can begin with some rather formal and methodological observations.

Reading the entire *Trilogy* continuously -from *Gloria* I to the *Epilogue*-, one sometimes finds reiterations of what has already been said. This is something that seems normal in a work of 16 volumes, which the author wrote *by hand* and without major corrections over a period of 26 years, as can be seen in the revision of his manuscripts, currently in the Balthasar Archive (Basel). This makes some repetitions, whether of brief ideas or even of broader themes, understandable and unavoidable in the later books. This, however, does not prove to be a problem, since the vast majority of readers will only take in hand some book(s) or look only at some particular aspect of a certain volume, where it was then necessary to recall things already said, given the total length of the work.

Reviewing now more closely his three fundamental parts, it can be affirmed that the 7 volumes of *Gloria* and the 5 volumes of *Theodramatica* clearly appear as mature fruits of Balthasar's reflection and extensive work; on the other hand, the three volumes (or two) of *Theologica*, written quite late in his life, clearly do not show the same scope of work. This is not to say - by any means - that they are not valuable, or that they are shallow, or of little

value, but simply that a certain weariness is perceptible, a product of the years or of the desire to finally finish this work, or both. In any case, every reader can easily appreciate that it does not follow his classic scheme -developed in a methodological key- of reflecting (in general) historically on the most important themes . And, above all, the last volume (*Theologica* III) leaves the impression -I could be wrong- of being a rather quick compilation and without his usual depth, nor his constant concern not to leave any important aspect out, neither historical nor theological. And, furthermore, it must be added that the first volume of *Theologica* is only the reprint of a work written 40 years earlier (even though at that time he already had the project of completing it with the other two volumes).

Thirdly, in order to interpret Balthasar's intent properly, his work should not be read as the proposal of a "closed system" -something he explicitly rejects-, nor of a finished synthesis. His intention is, rather, to show the *totality* of Christianity as a *form* that, from faith, can be read and accepted fruitfully for the following of Christ and the development of human life. It is a matter of proposing the fundamental structure of revelation in harmony with the basic structure of the created being -which allows the human being to apprehend that revelation- starting from the polarities of the transcendentals of the created being -beauty, goodness and truth-. Hence its methodological structure of accumulating aspects -one after the other- which, in their mutual integration and sum, gradually reflect that transcendental totality in a categorical form perceptible to the human being. Hence the meaning and significance of his historical views, of his review of the expressions of human culture and art, and of his attempt to harmonize statements that appear to be in opposition: they are the traces that make up the finished figure. A closed system - in the manner of an ideology - leaves no loose strand, but neither does it leave room for new integrations; on the other hand, the "totality of form" is always open to new integrative strokes, since it insinuates more than it shows. That is Balthasar's claim in this *Trilogy*.

Together with the above, we must recognize a very important methodological principle in Balthasar: all theological elaboration is born of the revelation of God - which is gratuitous and unexpected (for the human being) - in such a way that the method of all theology must be in tune with its object, which is properly the *unforeseeable* Word made flesh. This means that the Christian event is something that could not have been thought of or imagined before it happened, even if it was thus pre-determined by God immemorially, that is, since time immemorial. This methodological principle is absolutely central: the Christ event could not possibly have been suspected, conceived or outlined beforehand. And, therefore, he is the measure of everything else, from him the previous is interpreted, and from faith in him theological reflection takes place, not the other way around. For Balthasar, this aspect is

central to Christian theology-and to the revelation of God-because it "allows" God to be God. No one can tell God how he should be, or how he should reveal himself. Here, in addition to being in a critical orientation towards some transcendental theology, for Balthasar a fundamental principle of Christianity is at stake: the primacy and freedom of God in the face of man. We know that this position has been criticized, in the sense that it would allow an eventual mythologization of Christianity, since it is supposedly thinkable some revelation "without" attention to the conditions of possibility (anthropological) of the same revelation. But beyond the danger that this could ever actually happen, it seems to me that Balthasar knows this and overcomes this danger well. Indeed, he does so from the fundamental structure of his theology based on the transcendentals of being (and of creation in Christ), which are precisely his attempt to ground revelation within the radical created and human structure. However, assuming the latter (without which there is no revelation either, because there would be no possibility of listening on the part of the created being), Balthasar rightly insists that every theology must always hold absolutely firm that God, as absolute - Totally *Other* and *Not-Other* - and distinct from man ("for I am God, and not man" [Hos 11:9]) will reveal himself - at all times - in a way not previously thought of by the human being, precisely because he is man and not God (Ezek 28:9). Perhaps this is one of the most fundamental characteristics of his method and of his complete theology.

A fifth aspect -very characteristic in his treatment of the various topics he studies- are the historical reviews of a certain thought or of the development of a particular doctrine. There he attempts a look that, obviously, is synthesizing and must naturally leave elements out; and that, in addition, does not pretend to deliver a global and total vision of each one of the authors treated, nor to make a *history* of the doctrines mentioned. The objective of these reviews is rather another: to examine the evolution of an idea that is pursuing in a given argument, but starting from the *core of* each author, so that the totality of the author appears from that particular perspective. Or what is the same, to review the core of each author from a specific point of view. With this, in spite of looking at each author from the position from which he is working on a certain theme -where it is not always so clear where the author ends and Balthasar begins-, he does not misrepresent them or take them out of their context, since he looks at them from their own theological core and respecting their own intentionality (of each author). So, it is a truly honest look of each author, even if it is from his own perspective and for his own purpose. This is a very relevant criterion to understand Balthasar, to understand his historical revisions and to be fair with his philosophical and theological interpretations, so common in his work. This can be patently exemplified in the volumes on metaphysics (*Gloria* IV and V), or in the development of the doctrine of grace or soteriology,

in *Theodramatics* II and IV, respectively. This is an extremely important methodological point for a proper understanding of Balthasar.

Thinking now of his potential readers, it is undeniable the difficulty that many of his pages may present. Balthasar is a complex writer. He is such a tremendously learned intellectual that he is difficult to follow in many of his aspects, either because of his commentaries on lesser known authors, or because of the difficulty of his own thought. To understand him properly, therefore, one must be sufficiently well acquainted with his whole theological, philosophical and literary context, and particularly with German Romanticism. All of this can become a difficulty when it comes to delving into his most complete work, but, looked at from another angle, this challenge is also a gateway to the riches of his thought, since by knowing this intellectual context one can reach the treasures and depths of all his theology. The same can be said of his artistic background. It may be a limitation to understand him, but it is the limitation of every human person, which is marked by his context and his starting point. However, in this case, once again, Balthasar's starting point is novel and can be well exploited as a new and promising access to theology: from the *Gestalt* of Christianity.

B. From a theological point of view, beyond the accumulation of themes that we have been able to study throughout these pages, which contain many contributions for contemporary theology -and which we have highlighted throughout the chapters-, we can still gather some of his more global theological contributions.

A first important general contribution is his well-founded attempt to ground theological reflection in created reality, starting from beauty, goodness and truth. It seems to me that there is a contribution in his effort to show that Christian revelation is truly universal-it is for everyone and can reach everyone-not for an external reason or a simple desire of Christians, but because of the very structure in which and from which the mystery of God's revelation in Christ is realized. If God, in his path of manifestation to the human being, assumes the categories of created being-showing-itself, giving-itself, saying-itself creaturely-which is the characteristic and universal form of communion of all created beings-because it is what is proper and most common to being, the *most* universal-then it is assured that every human person, at any moment in history, can have access to this revelation, since it is not forbidden to anyone (always supposing the freedom of the listener). But the important thing is to give a reason why it is not closed to anyone. And here Balthasar gives one: it is founded in the structure of being itself, of all being, in the *communissimum* [= the most common] of all reality.

In relation to the above, it seems to me that the recovery of beauty, as complex as its understanding can be and the discussion that Balthasar's concept of it has sometimes raised -

as we have seen-, recovers and emphasizes an element that is an essential part of the Christian faith and that has often been neglected: the gratuitousness of revelation and faith (as the acceptance of that revelation). We are too accustomed to understand faith as a "doing" of things, an ethic, a praxis, sometimes even a moralism. Without in any way neglecting the need to keep the practical aspect of the following of Christ intact, the recovery of the transcendental "beauty" and, above all, the positioning of it as the first of the three transcendentals, emphasizes the fact that God presents himself above all as a gratuitous gift. Before telling us what to do, or teaching us what to think, he simply says to us: here I am, your God! And this means that he presents himself as the one who accompanies us, the one who loves us before any action of ours. All this produces, in the first place, admiration and recognition of God -as God-, which "allows" him to be God in our life. With this, Christianity escapes the moralistic impulse that has stalked it - as a permanent temptation - during an important part of its history.

A third thing - very relevant as a cardinal criterion - is his understanding of created reality - and, therefore, also of theology as a *human* intellection of revelation - from its radical polarity. For Balthasar, polarity, as the basic structure of all created reality, shows that nature is constituted in an irreducibly dual manner, where the constant tension between the poles gives its authentic vitality to reality itself, but where also each pole is always referred to and included in the other pole, even if it can never be reduced to the other [1311] . This is the opposite of a dialectic type of thinking, where one pole excludes the other. A thought that perceives and appreciates the polarity or duality of reality and values it in all its richness will understand that particular realities always need to be conceived *with and from the* other particular realities, without ever eliminating the tension between them. This allows theology not only to complement many of its aspects with other points of view in order to have a more adequate vision of the Christian mystery, but also to better understand and value otherness and diversity in the world and society. This thought, along with being adequate to the Trinitarian mystery (in which there is unity and difference in an absolute way, with the presence of a divine Other) is in tune with the valuing of diversity in today's modernity and avoids absolutism, intolerance and biased visions.

Yet another contribution, which must be taken into account in Balthasar's theological practice, is the intimate connection between theology and mysticism, the latter understood as a charism given to a person for a mission in the Church and the world. Undoubtedly this has to do with the presence and theology of Adrienne von Speyr in his life, but not only with that. It is a Balthasarian methodological principle, which should be considered as one of her contributions to contemporary theology and to the very understanding of theology: the use of

the mystical narrative as theology *proper*. If theology is a reflection of faith and Christian praxis, mystical experience (as the development of a charism given by God), insofar as faith and praxis in action, becomes, for Balthasar, a "theological place" apt for deepening the content of revelation. His is not simply to give a spiritual character to his reflection but, much more deeply, to value the experience of the encounter with God of every Christian - starting from the gift of the Holy Spirit - as an experience of true *knowledge* of God and, therefore, as a place of intellection of the revelation of God - united to human reflection -, which gives it a category of *theology*. A theology that takes seriously all aspects of the revelation of God cannot then do without mysticism and, moreover, can use its characteristic language which, as such, is also the bearer of a truth appropriate to that experience. This is what he authentically wants to express when he refers to a "theology of the knees" [1312] : a theology that draws its conclusions from the personal encounter with God and from what God does in each creature.

C. After a complete reading of this great work of Balthasar, from his global theological approach, some questions also arise, which are not resolved in all aspects. We can enunciate three of the most relevant ones.

The first question is to what extent what Balthasar assumes as a programmatic principle has been maintained as such and has been implemented - in its radicality - throughout his work; and has not remained only as a *desideratum*. He makes programmatic both the structure based on the three transcendentals of being, and then the use of dramatic instruments (to describe here the transcendental goodness at the core of his work or *Theodramatics*). However, after reading the 16 volumes of the *Trilogy*, one may wonder -at last- what real weight this programmatic project he indicated really had in the development of his work; or if these premises were not only a kind of explanation, an example, a possibility of interpretation, but that, in practice, have not affected the basic content of his presentation, nor of his development. We must admit that some of this can indeed be concluded from Balthasar's work, especially with regard to the *Theodramatics*, since the instrumentality of the theater only appears at length in vol. I, but almost disappears in the successive volumes, with the exception of the theme of the role. It is not surprising, therefore, that a reader of the complete work, for example, would find it difficult to find the innermost articulation between the fundamental aesthetics presented in *Gloria* and the various theological treatises presented later in the *Theodramática*. But, on the other hand, there is really no other way to carry out such a project, because, in the case of the transcendentals, what Balthasar is indicating is that the transcendentals of being are the great *background* for understanding this human reality on which the whole understanding of revelation is based. The transcendentals are present all the

time, but in a latent way. They are like a hint, a clue, an outline that helps a lot in the understanding of what is related page by page, although they do not have to be made explicit at every moment. The same can be said -to a lesser extent- of the dramatic instrumentality for the second part of the *Trilogy*. However, this cannot really be otherwise, since Christian reflection will always be somewhat fragmentary -the opposite of a closed or ideological system- because theology, as an attempt to understand a mystery that infinitely surpasses us, will always be unfinished and will only provide clues to its comprehension, never a clear elucidation. However, if we understand fundamental aesthetics as the presentation of a *form* (= content) to be accepted, intrinsic integration with dogmatics is assured.

Secondly, we can ask ourselves to what extent Balthasar -numerous times throughout his work- succeeds in fully realizing the syntheses sought and promised, after inserting the different historical elements, attaching the opposing propositions and showing the structures that order the elements presented. Several times the impression may arise that he has left (or left) elements out or aspects that have not been adequately incorporated. Well, if this is true, it is also true that this is showing precisely the method and the intellection about Balthasar's own theology, which is its characteristic and its strength -although also its possible limitation-. It should never be forgotten that Balthasar presents revelation -and theology about it- as a "form", that is, a totality, a "picture", that an artist -the divine artist- has designed with his own revelation, but which we can describe (paint) only from brushstrokes and strokes that slowly configure the total form. This is similar to impressionism: the painting is understood only from the totality and from there the form is perceived in its truth and beauty, although if one looks closely at the details, many aspects remain unresolved, white spaces and strokes that seem misguided. But that is what is proper to Christianity: a mystery that can be solved in all its elements only in eschatology.

And we can also ask ourselves if those topics that have aroused greater criticism or controversy are indeed theological problems of Balthasar himself, or are simply the product of a decontextualized understanding of his affirmations. Examples of this could be his theology on the sexes or his affirmations and conjectures about the duty to hope in the salvation of all. Without entering now into the merit of these themes per se - something we have already done in the relevant chapters -, I believe that Balthasar leaves here an enormous challenge: starting from one of his dearest methodological principles, all his particular themes must be read from the *total form*. If the whole is in the fragment, then each fragment is to be understood only from that whole. Justice will not be done to its most particular themes - and risks not only not understanding them in their deepest truth, but even simply misrepresenting them - if they are not understood from the totality of its theology; not in a materially all-encompassing sense of

it - something often impracticable or definitely impossible - but in the sense of understanding them from the basic structure of its thought and in its original nucleus. Returning to our examples, if what Balthasar says about the symbolic identification of the active with the masculine and the passive with the feminine were not understood - besides its culturally situated origin - from its previous Trinitarian conception, where the active and the passive are equally original and equally important and divine, and where the Son of God himself is both passive and active; then this masculine-feminine symbolism, which allows him to interpret ecclesiology and the Christian faith as word-response (where he obviously knows how to mark the essential difference between the male-female polarity and that of God-creature) -and the consequences he draws from it- would then, of course, become a discriminating stereotype that, with justice, would have been criticized -and also exploited for other purposes-, but which would not do justice to what Balthasar really thinks and truly seems to have meant. The same can be said about his conjectures about hell. If they are not understood from his overall eschatological thought, not only is the hierarchy of truths of his theological understanding misrepresented, but his thought is definitely manipulated. Only if one proceeds in intellectually honest manner with "total Balthasar", one can then perfectly well discuss, criticize or definitely disagree with some partial or broader aspect of his theology.

D. Finally, if we think of the future of this theological proposal, we cannot obviously guess the future, nor the always surprising and unexpected directions in which humanity and its currents of thought will go; however, from what we are able to glimpse today, and from what Balthasar's reading has left us, we can hope that his theology will still have a vigorous unfolding in the coming time. His reflection leaves us with the conviction that his work has not yet been fully explored, nor has the consequences of his work been drawn, nor has Balthasar's attempt been given all the importance it deserves; especially beyond the northern hemisphere - European and American - where his work is still largely unknown. However, this does not mean that his contribution, in the future, will necessarily change theology in any important way [1313] . We cannot know that, nor can we foresee it. Although we can hope for it.

On the other hand, we should not ignore his limitations, which are inherent to all human works. We could underline here, for example, its lack of interest and disregard for the exact sciences, and the lack of a theological reflection on them, which, in part, closes its access to some of today's important themes, such as a theological proposal on ecological themes (an eco-theology). And this is a topic that will certainly be among the arguments of greatest interest in the coming years. But which author is free from the claim that he has not reflected on all the issues, or that he has not been interested in all the arguments, or that he has not

contributed equally to all the questions debated? It seems to me, on the other hand, that we must remain with the great contributions of your theology, which are many.

In this sense, his great openness to the cultural movements of his own context undoubtedly augurs that his theology can also be understood, assimilated and elaborated in new contexts. It has been elaborated, precisely, from the most universal that exists -the transcendentals of being- and from an openness to human language -that is, to the human person- which is expressed in literary-dramatic production. This quality, so characteristic of his work, makes of his theology a thought apt to be accepted in other contexts and so that, in them, the great mystery of the Christian revelation is transparent and deepened and can be understood by the human being from those new contexts.

Let us say, finally, that his multiple theological intuitions -some of them coming from Adrienne von Speyr- deserve our full attention and, beyond the way he concretely resolves each theme, the theological reflections -as such- will remain in the future as proposals that can be further developed according to new contexts and problems. If this is so, we can expect, then, that in the future new theological elaborations will emerge inspired by this great author, who has already gone down in the history of Christianity as one of its great thinkers, to whom the Church owes gratitude. But the Church herself has also been left with the immense responsibility of preserving his legacy in the future.

Suggested bibliography

Here are some good studies, either about Balthasar's theology in general, or about particular themes, which can be useful to continue deepening in his thought, or to guide a more systematic reading of his *Trilogy*. It is by no means a complete list, but only an orientation to some well-written, useful and accessible books and articles, which can accompany the reading of Balthasar's work itself, which is certainly the ultimate goal of this text. As the aim of this brief list is simply to enlighten for the choice of some profitable reading, this help is necessarily a "painful" selection of works, within a very wide universe. That is why, perhaps, not even some of the best texts are included and certainly some very good texts have been left out. I have only wanted to include a list of good works, accessible because of their language or topicality, to guide the reader in his reading of Balthasar. Let us also remember that practically all of Balthasar's main works have been translated and published in Spanish by Ediciones Encuentro. Some of the texts presented here have already been cited throughout the book.

For a complete bibliographical review, you can visit the *Hans Urs von Balthasar Stiftung* website, which has a very complete bibliography on Balthasar: http://www.johannes-verlag.de/jh_huvb_sekund.htm.

General introductions to his theology

The texts are ordered according to their accessibility and general subject matter.

Rodrigo Polanco *, Hans Urs von Balthasar I. Ejes estructurantes de su teología,* Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 2021.

Angelo Scola *, Hans Urs von Balthasar. Un estilo teológico,* Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 1997.

Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004.

Bede McGregor - Thomas Norris *, The Beauty of Christ. An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar,* T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1994.

Karen Kilby *, Balthasar. A (very) critical introduction,* W.B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids (Mich.) 2012.

Philippe Barbarin *, "Théologie et sainteté". Introduction à Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Parole et Silence, Paris 2017.

Aidan Nichols *, The Word Has Been Abroad. A Guide Through Balthasar's Aesthetics,* T. & T.

Clark, Edinburgh 1998.

Aidan Nichols , *No Bloodless Myth. A Guide Through Balthasar's Dramatics,* T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 2000.

Aidan Nichols , *Say it is Pentecost. A Guide Through Balthasar's Logic,* T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 2001.

More specific thematic texts

The texts are arranged according to their subject matter.

Pascal Ide, *Être et mystère. La philosophie de Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Culture et Vérité, Bruxelles 1995.

Eliecer Pérez Haro , *The Mystery of Being. Una mediación entre filosofía y teología en Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Santandreu Editor, Barcelona 1994.

Georges de Schrijver , *Le merveilleux accord de l'homme et de Dieu. Étude de l'analogie de l'être chez Hans Urs von Balthasar,* University Press, Leuven 1983.

Louis Roberts , *The Theological Aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Catholic University of American Press, Washington DC 1987.

Larry Scott Chapp , *The God who speaks. Hans Urs von Balthasar's theology of revelation,* International Scholars Publications, San Francisco 1997.

Jesús Martínez Gordo , *La gloria del crucificado. La teología fundamental de Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao 1997.

Pascal Ide, *Une théo-logique du don. Le don dans la "Trilogie" de Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Peeters, Leuven 2013.

Giovanni Marchesi , *La cristologia trinitaria di Hans Urs von Balthasar. Gesù Cristo pienezza della rivelazione e della salvezza,* Editrice Queriniana, Brescia 1997.

Paolo Martinelli , *La morte di Cristo come rivelazione dell'amore trinitario nella teologia di Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Jaca Book, Milano 1996.

Edward T. Oakes , *Pattern of Redemption. The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Continuum Publishing Co., New York 1994.

Ellero Babini , *L'antropologia teologica di Hans Urs von Balthasar*. *Prefazione di Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Jaca Book, Milano 1988.

Thomas Dalzell , *The Dramatic Encounter of Divine and Human Freedom in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Peter Lang, Bern-Berlin-Frankfurt a.M. ^{2}2000.

Breandán Leahy , *El principio mariano en la eclesiología de Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Ciudad Nueva, Madrid 2002.

Nicholas J. Healy , *The Eschatology of Hans Urs von Balthasar. Being as Communion,* University Press, Oxford 2005.

Jacques Servais , *Théologie des Exercices spirituels. H. U. von Balthasar interprète saint Ignace,* Culture et Vérité, Bruxelles 1996.

Specific bibliography for each chapter

The readings are listed in order of importance, according to language, year and, above all, relevance to the topic.

Chapter I

Recommended reading of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Gloria, VI, pp. 13-36; *Gloria,* VII, pp. 15-28; 97-108; 195-214; "Exegese und Dogmatik", in *Communio* 5 (1976), pp. 385-392 (French and Italian translation available).

From other authors: John Riches , "The Biblical Basis of Glory," in Bede McGregor - Thomas Norris (eds), *The Beauty of Christ. An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar,* T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1994, pp. 56-72; W. T. Dickens , "Balthasar's biblical hermeneutics", in Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 175-186.

Chapter II

Recommended reading of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Theologica, II, pp. 125-154; *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 61-96.

From other authors: Rowan Williams , "Balthasar and the Trinity," in Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 37-50; Thomas G. Dalzell , "The Enrichment of God in Balthasar's Trinitarian Eschatology," in *Irish Theological Quarterly* 66 (2001), pp. 3-18; Karen Kilby , *Balthasar. A (very) Critical Introduction,* Wm. B. Eerdmans, Cambridge 2012, pp. 64-79; Jan-Heiner Tück , "The Utmost: On the Possibilities and Limits of a Trinitarian Theology of the Cross," in *Communio* 30 (Fall 2003), pp. 430-451.

Chapter III

Recommended reading of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Theodramatics, II, pp. 175-181; 191-196; 249-261; 267-277.

From other authors: Rodrigo Polanco , "Relación entre libertad finita e infinita en la experiencia cristiana y mística, según la *Teodramática* de Hans Urs von Balthasar", in Cecilia Inés Avenatti de Palumbo (coord.), *La libertad del Espíritu. Tres figuras en diálogo interdisciplinario: Teresa de Ávila, Paul Ricœur y Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Ágape Libros, Buenos

Aires 2014, pp. 263-278; Jacques Servais , "La libertà, dono di Cristo all'uomo, secondo Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Rivista Teologica di Lugano* 7 (2002), pp. 99-118; Anneliese Meis , "The Person as Concrete Singularity in the Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Theology and Life* 42 (2001), pp. 440-467; Jörg Disse , "Teilhabe an Gottes Freiheit. Zum Freiheitsverständnis in Hans Urs von Balthasar's 'Theodramatik'," in Edith Düsing - Werner Neuer - Hans-Dieter Klein (eds.), *Geist und Heiliger Geist. Philosophische und theologische Modelle von Paulus und Johannes bis Barth und Balthasar,* Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2009, pp. 351-370.

Chapter IV

Recommended reading of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Theodramatics, III, pp. 106-114; *Theodramatics,* IV, pp. 69-89; 399-404; 448-459. For a more complete view of the subject: *El todo en el fragmento,* Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 1992.

From other authors: Steffen Lösel , "Unapocalyptic Theology: History and Eschatology in Balthasar's Theo-Drama," in *Modern Theology (Oxford)* 17/2 (2001), pp. 201-225; Vincent Holzer , "L'eschatologie trinitaire et la critique de la philosophie de l'histoire chez Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Transversalités* 112 (2009), pp. 89-123.

Chapter V

Recommended reading from Hans Urs von Balthasar: Theodramatics, III, pp. 143-189.

From other authors: Giuseppe De Virgilio , "La cristologia di H. Urs von Balthasar: missione e persona di Cristo", in Studium 85 (1990), pp. 183-203; Mark A. McIntosh , "Christology", in Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 183-36. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 24-36.

Chapter VI

Recommended reading of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Teodramática, IV, pp. 209-221; 295-308; *Teología de los tres días. El Misterio Pascual,* Madrid, Ediciones Encuentro, 2000.

From other authors: Antoine Birot , "'In Christ was God reconciling the world to himself'. Balthasar's Redemption," in *Communio* 19 (1997), pp. 122-145; Paolo Martinelli , "Mistero Pasquale, Sabato Santo e Rivelazione Trinitaria. Considerazioni su un'idea fondamentale di Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Communio* 223 (2010), pp. 10-23.

Chapter VII

Recommended reading from Hans Urs von Balthasar: Theologica, III, pp. 71-106; 221-248.

From other authors: Joseph K. Gordon , "'The Incomprehensible Someone'. Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Mission of the Holy Spirit for a Contemporary Theology of History," in Christopher Ben Simpson - Steven D. Cone (eds.), *Theology in the Present Age. Essays in Honor of John D. Castelein,* Pickwick Publications, Eugene (Oregon) 2013, pp. 29-51; Ellero Babini , "The Holy Spirit and the Church in the Theology of H. U. von Balthasar," in Pedro Rodriguez et alii (eds.), *The Holy Spirit and the Church. XIX Simposio Internacional de Teología de la Universidad de Navarra,* Publicaciones Universidad de Navarra, Navarra 1999, pp. 363-371.

Chapter VIII

Recommended reading of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Theodramatics, III, pp. 271-278; 295-330; *Gloria*, I, pp. 309-322.

From other authors: Stephan Ackermann , "The Church as Person in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Communio* 29 (Summer 2002), pp. 238-249; John Saward , "Mary and Peter in the Christological Constellation: Balthasar's Ecclesiology," in John Riches (ed.), *The Analogy of Beauty,* T&T Clark Ltd, Edinburg 1986, pp. 105-133; Lucy Gardner , "Balthasar and the figure of Mary," in Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 64-78.

Chapter IX

Recommended reading of Hans Urs von Balthasar: "¿Qué podemos esperar?", in *Tratado sobre el infierno,* Edicep, Valencia 1999, pp. 8-128; *Teodramática*, V, pp. 296-316; 413-421.

From other authors: Geoffrey Wainwright , "Eschatology", in Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 113-127; Roberto Carelli , "L'assolutezza dell'amore e la fecondità delle origini. I riflessi protologici dell'eschatologia di Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Path* 8 (2009), pp. 423-447.

Index of authors

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[1] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Zu seinem Werk* (ed. by Cornelia Capol), Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, Freiburg i.Br. [2]2000, p. 79.

[2] "Form" here translates the versatile German concept "*Gestalt*", which can also - or perhaps better - be translated as "figure". It means the "exteriority and body, extension and place, thickness and contour, movement and envelope through which a presence is said and made real for others" (Olegario González de Cardedal, "La obra teológica de Hans Urs von Balt hasar", in *Communio. Revista Católica Internacional (Madrid)* 10 (1988), pp. 365-396, here 380). It indicates something "harmonious, well structured and ordered", "something unitary and proportionate in all its parts, as well as in its constitutive and manifestative forms" (Giovanni Marchesi, "La gloria nell'estetica teologica di Hans Urs von Balthasar", in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 128/3 (1977), pp. 370-384, here 382). It can also be understood as that which is gradually unveiled, a figure indissolubly united to a deeper dimension of which it is the bearer. And all this is Christ, as "the center of the form [or figure] that reveals itself (*die Mitte der Offenbarungsgestalt)" (Gloria,* I, p. 413). Nevertheless, I have preferred to keep the term "form" in order to be in harmony with the most common Spanish translation of the concept in the volumes of Balthasar'*s Trilogy*.

[3] Rodrigo Polanco *, Hans Urs von Balthasar I. Ejes estructurantes su teología, Ediciones* Encuentro, Madrid 2021, chap. *Ejes estructurantes de su teología,* Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 2021, chapter II.

[4] *Gloria,* VI, p. 13.

[5] *Gloria,* VI, p. 16.

[6] *Gloria,* VI, p. 22.

(7) Cf. W. T. Dickens , "Balthasar's biblical hermeneutics", in Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 175-186, here pp. 179-180.

[8] Cf. *Gloria,* I, pp. 379-601.

[9] Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 17-27.

[10] *Theologica,* II, pp. 17-18.

[11] *Theology,* II, p. 18.

[12] *Theology,* II, p. 20.

[13] Cf. Giovanni Marchesi , "Gesù Cristo, irradiazione della Gloria", in *Communio* 203-204 (2005), pp. 86-104, here p. 100.

[14] *Theology,* II, p. 20.

[15] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 26.

[16] Cf. *Theodramática,* II, p. 27.

[17] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 28.

[18] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 31.

[19] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 34.

[20] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 83.

[21] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 87.

[22] Cf. John Riches , "The Biblical Basis of Glory," in Bede McGregor - Thomas Norris (eds), *The Beauty of Christ. An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar,* T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1994, pp. 56-72, here p. 65.

[23] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 107.

[24] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 108.

[25] Cf. Edward T. Oakes , "Balthasar's Critique of the Historical-Critical Method," in Ed Block (ed.), *Glory, Grace, and Culture. The Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Paulist Press, New York/ Mahwah NJ 2005, pp. 150-174, here p. 154.

[26] Cf. *Theologica,* II, p. 239.

[27] Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 242-244.

[28] *Theology,* II, p. 244.

[29] *Theology,* II, p. 245.

[30] *Theology,* II, p. 260.

[31] *Theology,* II, p. 260.

[32] *Theology,* II, p. 261.

[33] *Theology,* II, p. 261.

[34] *Theology,* II, p. 264.

[35] Cf. Polanco *, Hans Urs von Balthasar I...*, op. cit., chapter IV.

[36] Cf. also Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Exegese und Dogmatik", in *Communio* 5 (1976), pp. 385-392.

[37] *Epilogue,* p. 84.

[38] Cf. Angela Franz Franks , "Trinitarian analogia entis in Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *The Thomist* 62 (1998), pp. 533-559.

[39] *Epilogue,* p. 87.

[40] *Epilogue,* p. 90.

[41] Cf. Riches , "The Biblical Basis of Glory", op. cit. p. 65.

[42] *Theologica,* II, pp. 75-76.

[43] *Theology,* II, p. 79.

[44] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 100.

[45] . Cf. Larry Chapp , "Revelation", in Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 11-23, here p. 13.

[46] *Gloria,* VI, p. 20.

[47] *Gloria,* VI, p. 13.

[48] *Gloria,* VI, p. 35.

[49] *Gloria,* VI, p. 32.

[50] *Gloria*, VI, pp. 32-33.

[51] *Gloria,* VI, p. 33.

[52] *Gloria,* VI, p. 34.

[53] *Gloria,* VI, pp. 48-49.

[54] *Gloria,* VI, pp. 48-49, note 3.

[55] *Gloria,* VI, p. 80.

[56] Cf. *Gloria,* VI, p. 127.

[57] *Gloria,* VI, p. 131.

[58] Cf. *Gloria,* VI, pp. 132-156.

[59] *Gloria,* VI, p. 189.

[60] *Gloria,* VI, p. 195.

[61] Cf. *Gloria,* VI, pp. 199-258.

[62] Cf. Riches , "The Biblical Basis of Glory", op. cit. p. 70.

[63] *Gloria,* VI, pp. 262-263.

[64] *Gloria,* VI, pp. 317-318.

[65] *Gloria,* VI, p. 318.

[66] *Gloria,* VI, p. 322.

67 Cf. *Gloria,* VI, pp. 349-359.
68 *Gloria,* VI, p. 349.
69 *Gloria,* VI, p. 350.
70 *Gloria,* VI, p. 350.
71 *Gloria,* VI, pp. 350-351.
72 *Gloria,* VI, p. 357.
73 Cf. Oakes , "Balthasar's Critique...", op. cit., pp. 163-166.
74 Cf. Riches , "The Biblical Basis of Glory," op. cit. pp. 62-63.
75 *Gloria,* VII, p. 15.
76 *Gloria,* VII, p. 16.
77 Cf. *Gloria,* VII, pp. 16-28.
78 *Gloria,* VII, p. 16.
79 *Gloria,* VII, p. 19.
80 *Gloria,* VII, p. 20.
81 *Gloria,* VII, p. 22.
82 Cf. *Gloria,* VII, p. 24.
83 Cf. *Gloria,* VII, p. 57.
84 *Gloria,* VII, p. 76.
85 *Gloria,* VII, p. 31.
86 Cf. Riches , "The Biblical Basis of Glory", op. cit. p. 63.
87 Cf. *Gloria,* VII, pp. 33-34.
88 *Gloria,* VII, p. 37.
89 Cf. *Gloria,* VII, pp. 97-98.
90 *Gloria,* VII, p. 98.
91 Cf. Riches , "The Biblical Basis of Glory", op. cit. p. 66.
92 *Gloria,* VII, p. 102.
93 Cf. *Gloria,* VII, pp. 104-105.
94 Cf. *Gloria,* VII, p. 107.
95 *Gloria,* VII, pp. 109-110.
96 *Gloria,* VII, p. 119*.
97 *Gloria,* VII, p. 133.
98 Cf. *Gloria,* VII, p. 168.
99 Cf. infra, chapter VI: Trinitarian Soteriology and the redemptive substitution of Jesus.
100 *Gloria,* VII, p. 167.
101 *Gloria,* VII, p. 171.
102 *Gloria,* VII, p. 175.
103 *Gloria,* VII, p. 176.
104 On all this, cf. infra, chapter II: Trinity and existence of the "other" in God.
105 *Gloria,* VII, p. 197.
106 *Gloria,* VII, p. 212.
107 *Gloria,* VII, p. 198.
108 *Gloria,* VII, p. 199.
109 *Gloria,* VII, p. 209.
110 In the sense of "not-another-thing-else": it is not just another object in the world, however great and perfect that object may be thought to be.
111 *Gloria,* VII, p. 216.
112 Cf. *Gloria,* VII, p. 228.
113 *Gloria,* VII, p. 231.
114 *Gloria,* VII, p. 234.

[115] Cf. *Gloria,* VII, p. 238.
[116] *Gloria,* VII, p. 241.
[117] *Gloria,* VII, p. 242.
[118] *Gloria,* VII, p. 259.
[119] *Gloria,* VII, p. 260.
[120] *Gloria,* VII, p. 262.
[121] *Gloria,* VII, p. 268.
[122] *Gloria,* VII, p. 263.
[123] Cf. *Gloria,* VII, p. 304.
[124] *Gloria,* VII, p. 305. Cf. p. p. 306.
[125] *Gloria,* VII, p. 315.
[126] Cf. *Gloria,* VII, pp. 318-319.
[127] Cf. *Gloria,* VII, pp. 349-350.
[128] Cf. David Brown , "Glory and beauty in the world and in God: a critique of Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 18 (2018), pp. 173-186.
[129] Cf. Oakes , "Balthasar's Critique...", op. cit.
[130] Cf. Riches , "The Biblical Basis of Glory," op. cit. p. 70.
[131] Cf. *Gloria,* VI, p. 13; *Theologica,* I, p. 22.
[132] Cf. *Gloria,* VI, pp. 13-14.
[133] Cf. Oakes , "Balthasar's Critique...", op. cit., pp. 161-162.
[134] In addition to what was said at the beginning of this chapter, cf. infra, chapter V: Human life of the Word made flesh.
[135] *Theology,* II, p. 169.
[136] *Theology,* I, p. 21.
[137] Cf. Karen Kilby *, Balthasar. A (very) Critical Introduction,* Wm. B. Eerdmans, Cambridge 2012, p. 64.
[138] This can be clearly seen, for example, when Balthasar, in the *Preliminary Remark* to *Theodramatics* V, affirms that this volume is of a particularly "Trinitarian" content and, which is written quoting "with frequency phrases taken from works of Adrienne von Speyr " to indicate "the basic coincidence between her conceptions" and Balthasar's thought (*Theodramatics,* V, p. 15). Cf. Polanco *, Hans Urs von Balthasar I...*, op. cit., chapter III: "Two halves of a whole". The theological relationship between Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr .
[139] Cf. Chapp , "Revelation", op. cit. p. 22.
[140] *Theology,* I, p. 22.
[141] Cf. Jan-Heiner Tück , "The Utmost: On the Possibilities and Limits of a Trinitarian Theology of the Cross," in *Communio* 30 (Fall 2003), pp. 430-451, here p. 443.
[142] In all that follows we assume that the Trinitarian (Thomistic) doctrine is basically known, since we will only highlight that which allows us to understand what is most characteristic of Balthasar.
[143] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 466.
[144] *Theodramatica,* II, pp. 15-16.
[145] The many biblical passages are well known: Mk 1:9-11; Lk 4:1,14,18-19; Mt 12:28; Acts 2:1-13; 8:14-17; 10:44-48; Jn 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:13-14; 20:22.
[146] *Theology,* II, p. 21.
[147] Kilby *, Balthasar. A (very) Critical...*, op. cit., p. 70.
[148] *Theology,* II, p. 24.
(149) . Cf. Rowan Williams , "Balthasar and the Trinity", in Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The*

Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 37-50, here pp. 37-40.

150 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 245.

151 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 246.

152 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 248.

153 Karl Rahner , "El Dios trino como principio y fundamento trascendente de la historia de la salvación", in J. Feiner - M. Löhrer (dirs.), *Mysterium salutis. Manual de teología como historia de la salvación,* vol. II/1, Cristiandad, Madrid 1969, pp. 359-449, here p. 370.

154 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 466.

155 Cf. Thomas G. Dalzell , "The Enrichment of God in Balthasar's Trinitarian Eschatology," in *Irish Theological Quarterly* 66 (2001), pp. 3-18, here p. 5.

156 Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 123-166: Logos and logic in God.

157 *Theology,* II, p. 125.

158 *Theology,* II, p. 126.

159 *Theology,* II, p. 128.

160 Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 128-133.

161 Cf. Dalzell , "The Enrichment of God...", op. cit., pp. 6-8.

162 *Theology,* II, p. 134.

163 *Theology,* II, p. 135.

164 *Theology,* II, p. 138.

165 *Theologica,* II, pp. 136-137.

166 Cf. *Theology,* II, p. 146.

167 *Theologica,* II, p. 149*.

168 *Theology,* II, p. 150.

169 *Theology,* II, p. 152.

170 Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 153-154.

171 *Theologica,* II, p. 162*.

172 *Theologica,* II, pp. 164-165.

173 Cf. infra, chapter VII: The Holy Spirit in the Church and the world.

174 Cf. *Theologica,* III, pp. 103-166.

175 Cf. *Theology,* III, p. 103.

176 Cf. *Theologica,* III, pp. 109-110.

177 *Theologica,* III, p. 111.

178 *Theology,* III, p. 118.

179 *Theology,* III, p. 119.

180 *Theology,* III, p. 125.

181 *Theology,* III, p. 127.

182 *Theology,* III, p. 129.

183 *Theologica,* III, p. 136.

184 *Theology,* III, p. 137.

185 *Theology,* III, p. 143.

186 *Theology,* III, p. 151.

187 Joseph Ratzinger *, Introduction to Christianity. Lecciones sobre el credo apostólico,* Sígueme, Salamanca [11]2005, p. 156, quoted in *Teológica,* III, p. 151.

188 *Theologica,* III, pp. 151-152.

189 *Theology,* III, p. 152.

190 Cf. Lateran IV (DH 805).

191 The word *unvordenklich,* which Balthasar uses on various occasions (e.g., *Theologica,* II, pp. 172-173 [162-163]; *Theologica,* III, p. 161 [145]; *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 184 [180]; 194

[190]; 212 [209] [in parentheses the page of the original]), literally means "not thinkable before". In the Spanish edition it has been translated, by José Pedro Tosaus (in *Teológica*), as "de antemano impensable" or "previously unthinkable"; and by Eloy Bueno de la Fuente and Jesús Camarero (in *Teodramática* III), as "im-pre-pensable". However, these translations -in themselves correct- can cause the misunderstanding that we are talking about something that we could not imagine before it happened. Instead, what is meant (and this is also understood in the context of the translations adduced) is, rather, "prior to all that is thinkable," that is, "from all eternity," "from everlasting," "prior to time and creation," "immemorial," "before the time to which one can go back," "unthinkably ancient," in other words, *eternal*. Moreover, the *unvordenklichen* "things" mentioned were indeed impossible to think or imagine before they were revealed to human beings; as Balthasar will postulate, as a basic methodological element of his theology. But these are two different themes, although related. Cf. Xavier Morales , "What concept of personal identity for Christology?", in *Theology and Life* 60/2 (2019), pp. 197-228, here pp. 226-227.

192 *Theologica,* III, pp. 160-161*.

193 Cf. *Die Welt des Gebetes,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1951.

194 *Theologica,* III, p. 161.

195 *Theology,* III, p. 162.

196 *Theologica,* III, pp. 162-163*.

197 *Theologica,* III, p. 163.

198 *Theologica,* III, p. 163.

199 *Theologica,* III, pp. 164-165.

200 *Adversus haereses* IV,20,1 (Adelin Rousseau - Bertrand Hemmerdinger - Louis Doutreleau - Charles Mercier *, Irénée de Lyon. Contre les Hérésies. Livre IV* [SC 100], vol. 2, Cerf, Paris 1965, p. 626).

201 This refers to the dispute between East and West over the validity and appropriateness of the introduction, by the Latin Church, in the second half of the first millennium, of the addition "and of the Son" (= *Filioque*), after "proceeds from the Father", in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Cf. Jean-Miguel Garrigues *, The Spirit who says "Father!". El Espíritu Santo en la vida trinitaria y el problema del Filioque,* Secretariado Trinitario, Salamanca 1985.

202 *Theology,* III, p. 175.

203 *Theology,* III, p. 176.

204 Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 173-180.

205 Cf. *Theologica,* III, pp. 183-184.

206 *Theologica,* III, p. 187*.

207 SC 100, op. cit., pp. 638-640.

208 Cf. Irenaeus *, Ad. haer*. III,19,1 (Adelin Rousseau - Louis Doutreleau *, Irénée de Lyon. Contre les Hérésies. Livre III* [SC 211], vol. 2, Cerf, Paris 1974, p. 374).

209 The common action of the Son and the Spirit can also be seen in the unity between theory and praxis present in the response of faith to revelation. The human being believes and accepts the revelation of the Son, but this faith becomes existential in a form of life inspired and led by the Spirit. Cf. *Theology,* III, p. 193.

210 Cf. *Theologica,* III, p. 198.

211 Cf. *Theologica,* III, pp. 199-201.

212 Cf. Williams , "Balthasar and the Trinity", op. cit., p. 48.

213 Cf. *Theologica,* III, pp. 207-218.

214 *Theology,* III, p. 207.

215 *Theologica,* III, pp. 209-210.

216 *Theologica,* III, p. 211.

[217] *Theologica,* III, pp. 211-212.
[218] *Theology,* III, p. 212.
[219] *Theology,* III, p. 213.
[220] *Theologica,* III, pp. 217-218.
[221] Karl Rahner , *Sämtliche Werke,* vol. 31: Im Gespräch über Kirche und Gesellschaft. Interviews und Stellungnahmen, Herder, Freiburg 2007, p. 113.
[222] Rahner , *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., p. 111. Cf. Steffen Lösel , "Unapocalyptic Theology: History and Eschatology in Balthasar's Theo-Drama," in *Modern Theology (Oxford)* 17/2 (2001), pp. 201-225, here p. 202.
[223] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 15.
[224] He said this from a question in a conversation with theology students at the University of Freiburg/Br in 1974, at the end of a study seminar. Cf. Rahner *, Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., pp. 109-120.
[225] Balthasar speaks of *Ganz-Andere* (= completely other), usually translated by "Totally Other," which does not exactly render the meaning.
[226] Cf. *Theologica,* II, p. 87.
[227] *Theology,* II, p. 88.
[228] *Theology,* II, p. 90.
[229] *Theology,* II, p. 92.
[230] Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 95-96.
[231] *Theology,* II, p. 97.
[232] *Theology,* II, p. 99.
[233] Cf. *Theologica,* II, p. 102.
[234] *Theology,* II, p. 99.
[235] Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 100-103.
[236] *Theology,* II, p. 107.
[237] *Theology,* II, p. 110.
[238] Cf. Gérard Rémy , "La dialectique de la connaissance de Dieu en théologie trinitaire," in *Revue des sciences religieuses* 79/2 (2005), pp. 219-247, here p. 236.
[239] Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 112-113.
[240] *Theology,* II, p. 116.
[241] *Theology,* II, p. 119.
[242] *Theology,* II, p. 121.
[243] *Theology,* II, p. 39.
[244] *Theology,* II, p. 39.
[245] *Theology,* II, p. 68.
[246] *Theology,* II, p. 67.
[247] *Theology,* II, p. 43.
[248] *Theology,* II, p. 45.
[249] *Theology,* II, p. 46.
[250] *Theology,* II, p. 46.
[251] *Theologica,* II, p. 47.
[252] *Theologica,* II, p. 48.
[253] *Theology,* II, p. 52.
[254] Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 60-64.
[255] *Theologica,* II, pp. 171-172.
[256] *Theology,* II, p. 172.
[257] *Theologica,* II, p. 173*.
[258] *Theology,* II, p. 174.

[259] Cf. Chapp , "Revelation", op. cit., p. 18.
[260] Cf. *Epilogue,* pp. 46-48; Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Intento de resumir mi pensamiento", in *Communio (Madrid)* 10 (1988), pp. 284-288, here p. 284. It was written in French and published as "Essai de résumer ma pensé", in *Revue des Deux Mondes* (October 1988), pp. 100-106. Also collected in Balthasar, *Zu seinem Werk,* op. cit., pp. 95-101.
[261] Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 175-180.
[262] *Theology,* II, p. 69.
[263] *Theology,* II, p. 71.
[264] *Theologica,* II, p. 72.
[265] Cf. supra, chap. I: Revelation of the glory of the Father in the manifestation/hiding of the incarnation.
[266] Cf. Franz, "Trinitarian analogia entis...", op. cit., pp. 533-559.
[267] Cf. Paolo Martinelli , "Mistero Pasquale, Sabato Santo e Rivelazione Trinitaria. Considerazioni su un'idea fondamentale di Hans Urs von Balthasar", in *Communio* 223 (2010), pp. 10-23. In any case, this is a topic that we will deal with more specifically in chapter VI, dedicated to soteriology.
[268] Tück , "The Utmost...", op. cit. p. 440.
[269] We will return to this concept in chapter V: Human life of the Word made flesh.
[270] Cf. Dalzell , "The Enrichment of God...", op. cit., pp. 8 and 16.
[271] Cf. infra*,* chapter VI: Trinitarian Soteriology and the redemptive substitution of Jesus.
[272] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 61. The quotation is from A. Gerken *, Theologie des Wortes*, Patmos, Düsseldorf 1963, p. 81.
[273] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 63.
[274] Cf. *Theodramática,* V, p. 64.
[275] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 65.
[276] Cf. *Theodramática,* V, pp. 66-67.
[277] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 75-76.
[278] Cf. *Theodramática,* V, pp. 80-82.
[279] Cf. *Theodramatics,* V, pp. 84-90. Here he deeply follows the work of Adrienne von Speyr , especially *Die Welt des Gebetes,* op. cit.
[280] Cf. *Theodramática,* V, pp. 90-93.
[281] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 489.
[282] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 491.
[283] *Theology,* I, p. 22.
[284] Cf. Balthasar, "An Attempt to Summarize...," op. cit. p. 287; *Theologica,* I, pp. 22-23.
[285] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 31.
[286] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 33.
[287] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 34.
[288] Cf. *Theodramática*, II*,* pp. 27-35.
[289] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 115.
[290] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 140.
[291] Cf. *Theodramática,* II, p. 150.
[292] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 159.
[293] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 161.
[294] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 163.
[295] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 164.
[296] Cf. *Theodramática,* II, pp. 170-173.
[297] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 175.
[298] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 176.

[299] *Theodramatica,* II, pp. 177-178.
[300] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 178* (emphasis in original).
[301] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 178.
[302] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 183.
[303] *Theodramatica,* II, pp. 184-185.
[304] Cf. *Ad. haer.* IV,14,2 (SC 100, op. cit., pp. 542-546); III,17,1 (SC 211, op. cit., p. 330).
[305] Cf. Ben Quash , *Theology and the Drama of History,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005, pp. 60-64.
[306] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 190*.
[307] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 191.
[308] Cf. *Theodramática,* II, pp. 191-194. On the polar tension in the created being, cf. *Epilogue,* pp. 53-80.
[309] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 194.
[310] Cf. Jörg Disse , "Teilhabe an Gottes Freiheit. Zum Freiheitsverständnis in Hans Urs von Balthasars 'Theodramatik'", in Edith Düsing - Werner Neuer - Hans-Dieter Klein (eds.), *Geist und Heiliger Geist. Philosophische und theologische Modelle von Paulus und Johannes bis Barth und Balthasar,* Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2009, pp. 351-370, here pp. 354-360.
[311] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 196.
[312] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 196.
[313] *Theodramatica,* II, pp. 196-197*.
[314] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 198.
[315] Cf. Jacques Servais , "La libertà, dono di Cristo all'uomo, secondo Hans Urs von Balthasar", in *Rivista Teologica di Lugano* 7 (2002), pp. 99-118, here pp. 103-113.
[316] *Theodramatica,* II, pp. 206-207.
[317] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 207*.
[318] Cf. Servais , "La libertà...", op. cit., pp. 113-117.
[319] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 209.
[320] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 210.
[321] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 211.
[322] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 212.
[323] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 213.
[324] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 214.
[325] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 217.
[326] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 216.
[327] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 219*.
[328] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 221.
[329] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 222.
[330] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 223.
[331] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 223.
[332] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 224.
[333] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 223.
[334] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 224.
[335] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 225.
[336] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 231.
[337] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 234.
[338] *Theodramatica,* II, pp. 234-235*.
[339] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 235.
[340] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 236.
[341] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 237.

342 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 238.
343 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 239.
344 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 239.
345 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 240.
346 Cf. *Theodramática,* II, p. 244.
347 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 247*.
348 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 245.
349 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 250.
350 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 252.
351 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 254*.
352 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 255.
353 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 257.
354 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 261.
355 Cf. Quash *, Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 79-81.
356 Cf. Disse , "Teilhabe an Gottes Freiheit...", op. cit. pp. 365-370.
357 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 262.
358 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 263.
359 *Theodramatica,* II, pp. 263-264.
360 Cf. *Theodramática,* II, p. 287.
361 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 288.
362 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 289.
363 Cf. *Theodramática,* II, pp. 289-290.
364 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 269.
365 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 273.
366 Cf. Quash *, Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 76-79.
367 *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 21-22.
368 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 25*.
369 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 44.
370 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 42.
371 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 243.
372 *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 245-246.
373 Cf. *Theodramática,* III, p. 246.
374 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 247.
375 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 248.
376 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 250.
377 *Teología de la historia,* Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 1992 (German original of 1950 and republished and expanded in 1959); *Das Ganze im Fragment. Aspekte der Geschichtstheologie* (= *The Whole in the Fragment. Aspects of the Theology of History),* Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, Freiburg i.Br. [2]1990 (German original 1963); *Solo el amor es digno de fe,* Sígueme, Salamanca [2]2006 (German original 1963).
378 *Theology of History*, op. cit. p. 5.
379 Cf. Vincent Holzer , "L'eschatologie trinitaire et la critique de la philosophie de l'histoire chez Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Transversalités* 112 (2009), pp. 89-123, here pp. 98-101.
380 Cf. supra, chap. II: Trinity and existence of the "other" in God.
381 Cf. infra, chapter IX: Eschatology from Christological hope.
382 Cf. Lösel , "Unapocalyptic Theology...", op. cit. p. 203.
383 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 463.
384 Cf. Holzer , "L'eschatologie trinitaire...", op. cit. p. 90.
385 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 464.

[386] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 465.
[387] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 467.
[388] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 471.
[389] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 481.
[390] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 464.
[391] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 481.
[392] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 487.
[393] Cf. *Theodramatics,* III, pp. 487-488. Cf. Polanco , *Hans Urs von Balthasar I...*, op. cit., chapter V: Christianity understood as a "Theo-dramatics".
[394] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 15.
[395] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 16.
[396] Cf. Lösel , "Unapocalyptic Theology...", op. cit., pp. 213-215.
[397] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 24.
[398] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, p. 19.
[399] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 29.
[400] *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 50-51.
[401] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 55.
[402] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 57.
[403] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 77.
[404] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 91.
[405] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 96.
[406] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 110.
[407] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 149.
[408] Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 63-141: II. Christology in perspective. A. The problem of method.
[409] Cf. Holzer , "L'eschatologie trinitaire...", op. cit., pp. 102-106.
[410] Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 106-114.
[411] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 107.
[412] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 108.
[413] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 99.
[414] Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 106-114.
[415] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 22.
[416] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 24.
[417] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 26.
[418] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 26-27.
[419] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 34.
[420] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 31.
[421] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 32.
[422] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 48-49.
[423] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, pp. 69-76; 82-89.
[424] Cf. Holzer , "L'eschatologie trinitaire...", op. cit., pp. 89-92.
[425] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 70.
[426] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 73.
[427] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 69.
[428] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, pp. 82-89.
[429] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 84.
[430] Cf. Lösel , "Unapocalyptic Theology...", op. cit., pp. 206-207.
[431] Cf. Holzer , "L'eschatologie trinitaire...", op. cit., pp. 93-98.
[432] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, pp. 84-89.

[433] Cf. Lösel , "Unapocalyptic Theology...", op. cit., pp. 203-206.
[434] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 187.
[435] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 207.
[436] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 187.
[437] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 188.
[438] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 193.
[439] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 197*.
[440] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 201.
[441] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 202.
[442] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 191.
[443] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 202.
[444] Cf. Karl Rahner *, Curso fundamental sobre la fe. Introduction to the Concept of Christianity,* Herder, Barcelona 1979, pp. 177-198; 216-253.
[445] Sígueme, Salamanca 1968 (original German 1966), pp. 93-105.
[446] On the differences between the two, cf. Karen Kilby , "Balthasar and Karl Rahner ", in Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 256-268.
[447] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 399.
[448] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 400.
[449] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 400*.
[450] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 405*.
[451] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 410. Rahner's quotation is found in *Schriften,* V, p. 218 (*Escritos de teología,* V, Taurus, Madrid 1964, p. 215). Cf. also Rahner *, Curso Fundamental...*, op. cit., pp. 206-207.
[452] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 415.
[453] *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 415-416.
[454] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 416.
[455] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, pp. 443-444.
[456] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 448.
[457] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 449.
[458] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 450.
[459] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 452.
[460] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, pp. 450-453.
[461] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 454.
[462] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 453.
[463] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 454.
[464] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 453.
[465] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, pp. 453-459.
[466] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 425.
[467] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 429.
[468] Cf. pp. 135-185.
[469] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 137.
[470] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 138.
[471] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 140.
[472] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 141.
[473] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 146.
[474] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 146.
[475] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 173.
[476] Cf. Quash *, Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 196-198.

477 Lösel , "Unapocalyptic Theology...", op. cit., pp. 218-219.

478 Cf. also Quash , *Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 193-195; Gerard O'Hanlon , "Theological Dramatics," in Bede McGregor - Thomas Norris (eds.), *The Beauty of Christ. An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar,* T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1994, pp. 92-111, here pp. 106-111.

479 *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 396-397*.

480 Gespräch mit H. U. von Balthasar (Broadcast by Erwin Koller on *Schweizer Fernsehen,* April 20, 1984, in the program "Zeugen des Jahrhunderts").

481 Cf. Rahner *, Curso Fundamental...,* op. cit., pp. 100-106.

482 Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 374-382.

483 Cf. Balthasar, *Seriousness with Things...,* op. cit., pp. 93-105.

484 Cf. infra, chapter V: Human life of the Word made flesh.

485 Cf. supra, chap. II: Trinity and existence of the "other" in God.

486 Cf. *Theodramática,* III, p. 19.

487 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 21.

488 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 22 (emphasis ours).

489 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 31.

490 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 39.

491 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 44.

492 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 45.

493 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 49.

494 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 63.

495 Cf. *Theodramática,* III, p. 67.

496 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 64.

497 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 65*.

498 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 66.

499 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 67.

500 Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 70-71.

501 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 72.

502 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 72.

503 Harald Riesenfeld , "Bemerkungen zur Frage des Selbstbewusstseins Jesu", in Ristow-Matthiae, *Der historiche Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus,* Evang. Verlag, Berlin 1960, pp. 331-341; Id., *The Gospel Tradition and its Beginnings. A Study in the Limits of "Formgeschichte",* A. R. Mowbray, London 1957; Id., *Tradition und Redaktion im Markusevangelium,* in *Ntl. Studien für R. Bultmann,* 1954, pp. 157-164.

504 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 74.

505 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 74.

506 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 78.

507 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 79.

508 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 80.

509 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 83.

510 *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 83-84.

511 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 85.

512 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 90.

513 Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 90-91.

514 *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 99-100.

515 Cf. supra, chapter IV: Foundations for a Christological theology of history.

516 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 115.

517 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 119.

518 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 120.

519 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 129.

520 Cf. supra, chap. I: Revelation of the glory of the Father in the manifestation/hiding of the incarnation.

521 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 135.

522 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 136.

523 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 137.

524 *Theologica,* II, pp. 213-214.

525 *Theologica,* II, p. 214.

526 *Theologica,* II, p. 215.

527 *Theologica,* II, p. 216.

528 Cf. *Theology,* II, p. 219.

529 *Theology,* II, p. 222.

530 *Theologica,* II, p. 226.

531 *Theologica,* II, p. 227.

532 *Theology,* II, p. 232.

533 *Theology,* II, p. 233, citing Rahner *, Fundamental Course...*, op. cit., pp. 315-316.

534 *Theologica,* II, p. 234.

535 *Theology,* II, p. 232.

536 *Theologica,* II, p. 235.

537 *Theology,* II, p. 236.

538 *Theology,* II, p. 237.

539 *Theology,* II, p. 272.

540 *Theologica,* II, p. 271.

541 *Theologica,* II, p. 273.

542 *Theology,* II, pp. 273-274, citing Karl Rahner , "For the Theology of the Incarnation," in *Writings on Theology*, vol. IV, Taurus, Madrid 1964, pp. 139-157, here pp. 152-153.

543 *Theologica,* II, p. 275.

544 Cf. Adrienne von Speyr *, Das Wort und die Mystik. II. Objektive Mystik* (Die Nachlasswerke VI), Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1970, pp. 149-153.

545 *Theologica,* II, p. 275.

546 *Theologica,* II, p. 276.

547 Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 157-164.

548 Especially, Adrienne von Speyr *, Das Wort und die Mystik. II. Objektive Mystik*, op. cit., pp. 155-156; Id., *Die Welt des Gebetes*, op. cit., pp. 29 and 70-74; Id., *Die Katholischen Briefe, I. Der Jakobusbrief. Die Petrusbriefe,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1961, p. 140; Id., *Erde und Himmel, I. Einübungen* (Die Nachlasswerke VIII), Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1975, n. 1751; Id., *Der grenzenlose Gott,* Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, Trier [2]1981, p. 84; Id., *Der Epheserbrief,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1983, p. 51.

549 *Theologica,* II, p. 278. He quotes Speyr *, Das Wort und die Mystik. II. Objektive Mystik,* op. cit., pp. 155-156 and *Die Welt des Gebetes,* op. cit., pp. 70-74.

550 *Theology,* II, p. 281.

551 Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 282-283.

552 *Theologica,* II, p. 286.

553 *Theologica,* II, p. 288.

554 *Theologica,* II, p. 305.

555 *Theologica,* II, p. 305.

556 *Theology,* II, p. 306.

557 *Theologica,* II, pp. 308-309.

[558] *Theologica,* II, p. 310.
[559] Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 310-314.
[560] *Theologica,* II, p. 325.
[561] *Theologica,* II, p. 331.
[562] *Theologica,* II, p. 332.
[563] "Of the many pertinent expressions of A. von Speyr we mostly stay with [Adrienne von Speyr *, Kreuz und Hölle, I. Die Passionen* (Die Nachlasswerke III), Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1966], but we also consult from time to time [Adrienne von Speyr *, Kreuz und Hölle. II. Auftragshöllen* (Die Nachlasswerke IV), Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1972], full of abundant information, Diaries 1-3 [= Adrienne von Speyr *, Erde und Himmel* (Die Nachlasswerke VIII-X), Bd. I-III, Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1975-1976] [...] and [Speyr *, Das Wort und die Mystik. II. Objektive Mystik*, op. cit.]" (*Theologica,* II, p. 332, note 1)" (*Theologica,* II, p. 332, note 1).
[564] Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 332-348.
[565] Cf. *Theologica,* II, pp. 333-334.
[566] Cf. *Theology,* II, p. 335.
[567] *Theologica,* II, p. 340.
[568] *Theologica,* II, p. 345.
[569] Cf. Oakes , "Balthasar's Critique...", op. cit. p. 161.
[570] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 143.
[571] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 144.
[572] Cf. Giuseppe De Virgilio , "La cristologia di H. Urs von Balthasar: missione e persona di Cristo", in *Studium* 85 (1990), pp. 183-203, here pp. 189-191.
[573] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 144*.
[574] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 145.
[575] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 146.
[576] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 148.
[577] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 149.
[578] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 150.
[579] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 152.
[580] Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 153-155.
[581] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 154.
[582] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 180.
[583] Cf. *Theodramatics,* III, pp. 176-177: "The identity [...] in Jesus between consciousness of self and consciousness of the mission or, what is the same thing, the concordance from always (*unvordenkliche*) of Jesus with the will of the Father, as regards the mission [...] takes us back [... to] the unanimous salvific design of the Trinity in which the sending of the Son was decided".
[584] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 184*.
[585] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 185.
[586] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 185-186*.
[587] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 187.
[588] Cf. De Virgilio , "La cristología...", op. cit., pp. 191-194.
[589] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 158.
[590] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 158.
[591] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 159.
[592] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 161.
[593] He refers to his "old work" "Fides Christi", in Sponsa Verbi. Ensayos teológicos, II, Ediciones Guadarrama, Madrid 1964 (original German 1961), pp. 57- 96. New edition:

Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 2001, pp. 47-79.

594 *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 162-163.

595 Karl Rahner , "Ponderaciones dogmáticas sobre el saber de Cristo y su conciencia de sí mismo", in *Escritos de teología,* V, Taurus, Madrid 1964, pp. 221-243; H. Riedlinger , *Geschichtlichkeit und Vollendung des Wissens Christi* (QD 32), Herder, Freiburg 1966, pp. 148-153.

596 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 164.

597 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 165.

598 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 166.

599 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 167*.

600 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 166.

601 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 167.

602 Karl Rahner , "Exegese und Dogmatik", in Herbert Vorgrimler (ed.), *Exegese und Dogmatik,* Grünewald, Mainz 1962, p. 40, quoted in *Theodramatics,* III, p. 154. The article is translated in Rahner *, Writings on Theology,* V, op. cit. pp. 83-111.

603 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 168.

604 Cf. Jean-Noël Dol, "L'inversion trinitaire chez Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Revue Thomiste (Toulouse)* 100 (2000), pp. 205-238, here pp. 216-218.

605 *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 173-174.

606 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 174.

607 Cf. Dol, "L'inversion trinitaire...", op. cit., pp. 219-237.

608 *Jesús, el Cristo,* Sígueme, Salamanca 1984, pp. 311-312, quoted in *Teodramática,* III, p. 175.

609 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 175.

610 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 180; cf. pp. 179-180.

611 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 176.

612 *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 177-178.

613 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 180.

614 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 189.

615 Cf. *Theodramática,* III, p. 192.

616 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 191.

617 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 192.

618 Cf. *Theodramatics,* III, p. 243: "From God's point of view [all who enter the theological stage *in Christōi*] can be 'chosen in Christ' before time (*unvordenklich*)."

[619] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 193-194*.
[620] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 195.
[621] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 196.
[622] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 202.
[623] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 203.
[624] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 203.
[625] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 205.
[626] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 206.
[627] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 207.
[628] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 208.
[629] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 209.
[630] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 211.
[631] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 212*.
[632] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 211.
[633] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 212.
[634] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 210.
[635] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 211.
[636] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 214.
[637] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 216.
[638] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 217.
[639] *Adversus haereses* V, Praef. (Adelin Rousseau - Louis Doutreleau - C. Mercier *, Irénée de Lyon. Contre les Hérésies. Livre V* (SC 153), vol. 2, Paris, Cerf, 1969, p. 14).
[640] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 222.
[641] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 223.
[642] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 226.
[643] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 227.
[644] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 229.
[645] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 228-229.
[646] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 229-230.
[647] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 231-232.
[648] Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 232-233.
[649] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 235.
[650] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 236.
[651] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 237.
[652] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 15.
[653] Cf. Tück , "The Utmost...", op. cit. p. 443.
[654] Cf. Antoine Birot , "'In Christ was God reconciling the world to himself'. Balthasar's Redemption", in *Communio* 19 (1997), pp. 122-145.
[655] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 209.
[656] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 211.
[657] *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 212 and 211.
[658] *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 214-215.
[659] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 215*.
[660] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 216.
[661] *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 216-217.
[662] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 220.
[663] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 218.

664 *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 218-219.
665 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 219.
666 *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 219-220.
667 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 220.
668 SC 153, op. cit., p. 14.
669 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 221.
670 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 222.
671 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 224.
672 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 226.
673 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 231.
674 Cf. Glenn W. Olsen , "St. Anselm's Place in Hans Urs von Balthasar's History of Soteriology," in Paul Gilbert - Helmut Kohlenberger - Elmar Salmann , *Cur Deus homo. Atti del Congresso Anselmiano Internazionale* (Roma, 21-23 maggio 1998), Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, Roma 1999, pp. 823-835.
675 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 233.
676 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 233.
677 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 234.
678 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 236.
679 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 237*.
680 *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 237-238.
681 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 238.
682 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 239.
683 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 243.
684 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 244 (emphasis ours).
685 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 245.
686 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 246.
687 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 247.
688 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 249.
689 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 249. Rahner's soteriology is found, above all, in Rahner , *Curso Fundamental...*, op. cit., pp. 311-353, although he also reviews and quotes other passages from the same or other works of the author.
690 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 250.
691 *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 251-252.
692 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 252.
693 Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, p. 253.
694 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 257*.
695 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 259.
696 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 260.
697 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 261.
698 *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 261-262.
699 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 263.
700 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 264.
701 *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 264-265.
702 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 265.
703 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 266.
704 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 266.
705 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 267.
706 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 268.
707 *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 270.

[708] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 271.
[709] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 272.
[710] Birot , "'In Christ was God'...", op. cit., pp. 138-140.
[711] Cf. Kevin Mongrain , "Theologians of Spiritual Transformation: A Proposal for Reading René Girard Through the Lenses of Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Cassian," in *Modern Theology* 28 (2012), pp. 81-111, here pp. 87-94.
[712] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, p. 273.
[713] Cf. Raymund Schwager , "Der Sohn Gottes und die Weltsünde. Zur Erlösungslehre von Hans Urs v. Balthasar," in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie (Wien)* 108 (1986), pp. 5-44.
[714] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, pp. 293-396.
[715] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 296.
[716] For Rahner , "the immanent (and necessary) Trinity is the necessary condition that makes God's free self-communication possible" (Rahner , "The Triune God...", op. cit..., p. 431, note 7), since "in God there is a real difference between the one and identical God insofar as he is at the same time and necessarily the originless being who mediates with himself (Father), p. 431, note 7), since "in God there is of itself the real difference between the one and identical God insofar as he is at the same time and necessarily the being without origin who mediates with himself (Father), the one pronounced for himself with truth (Son) and the one received and accepted by himself with love (Spirit), and *therefore* is the one who can freely self-communicate 'outwardly'" (Ibid., p. 431). But - Balthasar affirms - they are not three self-consciousnesses ("in the modern sense of 'person'"), and "they cannot say you to one another - which is why Jesus cannot address the Father with 'you' except as man, not as Son of God" (cf. Ibid., p. 377, note 27). Thus, for Balthasar, "he does not make himself credible" as love beyond the economy. All this (also Rahner's quotations) in *Theodramatics,* IV, p. 297.
[717] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 299.
[718] *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 299-300.
[719] Cf. Martinelli , "Mistero Pasquale...", op. cit., pp. 13-18.
[720] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 300.
[721] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 301.
[722] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 302.
[723] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 303.
[724] Cf. Antoine Birot , "Le Mystère pascal expression supreme de l'Amour trinitaire selon Adrienne von Speyr et Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Communio* 24 (1999), pp. 127-138.
[725] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 304.
[726] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 305.
[727] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 309.
[728] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 310*.
[729] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 311.
[730] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 311.
[731] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 312.
[732] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 313.
[733] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 315.
[734] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 316.
[735] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 317.
[736] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 322.
[737] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 324.
[738] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 326.
[739] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 328.
[740] *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 328-329.

[741] *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 330-331.
[742] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 331.
[743] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, pp. 336-337.
[744] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 337.
[745] Cf. infra, chapter VIII: The Church as a "concentrated" human response to the incarnate Word.
[746] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 337.
[747] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 338.
[748] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 338.
[749] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, pp. 339-340.
[750] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, p. 343.
[751] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 345.
[752] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, pp. 345-346.
[753] *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 348 and 347.
[754] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 348*.
[755] Cf. *Adv. haer.* V,9,3 (SC 153, op. cit., pp. 112-114).
[756] *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 354-355.
[757] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 355.
[758] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 364.
[759] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 365 (emphasis ours).
[760] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 369*.
[761] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 370.
[762] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 373.
[763] *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 374-375.
[764] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 377.
[765] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 380.
[766] *Theodramatica,* IV, p. 381.
[767] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, p. 393.
[768] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, p. 394.
[769] See, for example, the collection of articles on the subject in *Spiritus Creator. Ensayos Teológicos,* III, Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 2005 (German original of 1967); or throughout his work *La oración contemplativa,* Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 1985 (German original of 1955).
[770] *Theologica,* III, p. 27.
[771] *Theologica,* III, p. 29, citing Jean Yves Lacoste , "Zur Theologie des Geistes," in *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 15/1 (1986), pp. 1-7.
[772] *Theologica,* III, p. 27.
[773] *Theologica,* III, p. 30.
[774] Cf. supra, chap. I: Revelation of the glory of the Father in the manifestation/hiding of the incarnation.
[775] *Theologica,* III, p. 33.
[776] *Theologica,* III, p. 19.
[777] *Theologica,* III, p. 20.
[778] *Theologica,* III, p. 21.
[779] *Theology,* III, p. 23.
[780] *Theologica,* III, p. 87.
[781] *Theologica,* III, p. 99.
[782] *Theologica,* III, p. 100.
[783] *Theologica,* III, p. 101.

[784] *Theologica,* III, p. 87.
[785] *Theologica,* III, p. 88.
[786] *Theologica,* III, p. 89.
[787] *Theologica,* III, p. 94.
[788] *Theologica,* III, p. 95.
[789] *Theology,* III, p. 96.
[790] *Theologica,* III, p. 97.
[791] *Theologica,* III, p. 98.
[792] *Theologica,* III, pp. 93-94.
[793] *Theologica,* III, p. 91.
[794] *Theologica,* III, p. 71*.
[795] *Theologica,* III, p. 69.
[796] *Theologica,* III, p. 73.
[797] *Theologica,* III, p. 74.
[798] *Theologica,* III, p. 75.
[799] *Theologica,* III, pp. 75-76.
[800] *Theologica,* III, p. 76.
[801] Cf. *Theology,* III, p. 80.
[802] *Theologica,* III, p. 80.
[803] *Theologica,* III, p. 82*.
[804] *Theologica,* III, pp. 83 and 84.
[805] *Theologica,* III, p. 223.
[806] Cf. Ellero Babini , "The Holy Spirit and the Church in the Theology of H. U. von Balthasar", in Pedro Rodríguez et alii (eds.), *The Holy Spirit and the Church. XIX Simposio Internacional de Teología de la Universidad de Navarra,* Publicaciones Universidad de Navarra, Navarra 1999, pp. 363-371, here pp. 364-366.
[807] This has already been presented in the chapter on the Trinity. Cf. supra, chapter II: Trinity and existence of the "other" in God.
[808] Ferdinand Ulrich *, Leben in der Einheit von Leben und Tod,* Knecht, Frankfurt 1973, pp. 79-81.
[809] *Theologica,* III, p. 225.
[810] *Theologica,* III, pp. 225-226.
[811] In that Balthasar also follows Adrienne von Speyr , in *Die Welt des Gebetes,* op. cit. pp. 55-57.
[812] *Theologica,* III, pp. 226-227.
[813] *Theologica,* III, p. 230.
[814] Cf. SC 211, op. cit., pp. 328-330.
[815] *Theologica,* III, p. 231.
[816] Cf. supra, chap. III: Possibility of a relation between finite and infinite freedom.
[817] *Theologica,* III, p. 233.
[818] *Theologica,* III, p. 235.
[819] *Theologica,* III, p. 236.
[820] Speyr *, Die Welt des Gebetes,* op. cit. p. 50.
[821] *Theologica,* III, p. 236.
[822] Cf. John Randy Sachs , "Deus Semper Major - Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam: The Pneumatology and Spirituality of Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Gregorianum* 74 (1993), pp. 631-657, here pp. 638-646.
[823] *Theologica,* III, p. 236.
[824] *Theologica,* III, p. 237. Cf. Speyr *, Die Welt des Gebetes,* op. cit. p. 53.

[825] *Theologica,* III, p. 240.
[826] *Theologica,* III, p. 242.
[827] Cf. Joseph K. Gordon , "'The Incomprehensible Someone'. Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Mission of the Holy Spirit for a Contemporary Theology of History," in Christopher Ben Simpson - Steven D. Cone (eds.), *Theology in the Present Age. Essays in Honor of John D. Castelein,* Pickwick Publications, Eugene (Oregon) 2013, pp. 29-51, here p. 41.
[828] *Theologica,* III, p. 242.
[829] *Theologica,* III, p. 251.
[830] *Theologica,* III, p. 253.
[831] *Theologica,* III, p. 254.
[832] *Theologica,* III, p. 255.
[833] *Theologica,* III, p. 257.
[834] *Theologica,* III, p. 265.
[835] *Theologica,* III, p. 266.
[836] *Theologica,* III, pp. 266-267.
[837] *Theologica,* III, p. 289.
[838] Cf. Babini , "The Holy Spirit...", op. cit., pp. 366-367.
[839] *Theologica,* III, p. 295.
[840] *Theologica,* III, p. 297.
[841] *Theologica,* III, p. 302.
[842] *Theologica,* III, p. 305.
[843] Johannes A. Dorner , "Das Prinzip unserer Kirche nach dem innern Verhältnis der materiellen und formalen Seite desselben zueinander", in *Gesammelte Schriften aus dem Gebiet der systematischen Theologie: Exegese und Geschichte,* Verlag von Wilhelm Hertz, Berlin 1883, p. 99. 99. Quoted according to Karl Barth *, Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert,* Evangelischer Verlag, Zürich 1947, p. 531.
[844] *Theologica,* III, p. 305.
[845] *Theologica,* III, p. 306.
[846] Cf. Gordon , "'The Incomprehensible Someone'...", op. cit., pp. 42-45.
[847] *Theologica,* III, p. 308.
[848] *Theologica,* III, p. 309.
[849] *Theologica,* III, p. 317.
[850] *Theologica,* III, p. 334.
[851] Cf. *Theology,* III, p. 350.
[852] Cf. *Theology,* III, p. 355.
[853] *Theologica,* III, p. 313.
[854] *Theologica,* III, p. 366.
[855] *Theologica,* III, p. 367.
[856] Cf. *Theology,* III, p. 251.
[857] *Theologica,* III, p. 411.
[858] SC 100, op. cit., p. 626.
[859] *Theologica,* III, p. 412.
[860] Citing *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik,* III/1, Evangelischer Verlag, Zürich 1957, pp. 57-61.
[861] *Theologica,* III, p. 414.
[862] *Theologica,* III, p. 417*.
[863] *Theologica,* III, p. 418.
[864] *Theologica,* III, p. 419.
[865] *Theologica,* III, pp. 422-423.
[866] *Theologica,* III, p. 423.

[867] *Theologica,* III, p. 429.
[868] *Theologica,* III, p. 430.
[869] *Theologica,* III, pp. 432-433.
[870] *Theologica,* III, p. 433.
[871] *Theologica,* III, p. 440.
[872] *Theologica,* III, p. 437.
[873] *Theologica,* III, p. 438.
[874] *Theologica,* III, p. 440.
[875] *Theologica,* III, p. 443.
[876] *Theologica,* III, pp. 443-444.
[877] *Theologica,* III, p. 444.
[878] *Theologica,* III, p. 444.
[879] *Theologica,* III, p. 445.
[880] Cf. *Sponsa Verbi...*, op. cit.; *El complejo antirromano. Integración del papado en la Iglesia universal*, BAC, Madrid 1981 (original German 1974); *Derribar los bastiones* (*Schleifung der Bastionen. Von der Kirche in dieser Zeit*, Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1952); *Who is the Church* (*Wer ist die Kirche?*, Benziger, Einsiedeln 1965).

(881) Cf. Lucy Gardner , "Balthasar and the figure of Mary", in Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 64-78, here pp. 67-69, and especially note 5.

[882] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 251.
[883] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 252.
[884] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 257.
[885] Cf. John Saward , "Mary and Peter in the Christological Constellation: Balthasar's Ecclesiology," in John Riches (ed.), *The Analogy of Beauty,* T&T Clark Ltd., Edinburg 1986, pp. 105-133, here pp. 107-110.
[886] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 258.
[887] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 324.
[888] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 263.
[889] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 264.
[890] Cf. Corinne Crammer , "One sex or two? Balthasar's theology of the sexes", in Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 93-112, here pp. 93-101.
[891] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 264.
[892] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 264-265.
[893] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 265.
[894] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 266.
[895] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 267.
[896] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 268.
[897] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 269.
[898] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 340.
[899] *Theodramatica,* II, p. 331.
[900] Cf. Crammer , "One sex or two?...", op. cit., pp. 101-107.
[901] Cf. Kilby *, Balthasar. A (very) Critical...*, op. cit., pp. 82-85.88.
[902] Cf. Crammer , "One sex or two?...", op. cit., pp. 101-102.
[903] Kilby *, Balthasar. A (very) Critical...*, op. cit., p. 81.
[904] Cf. Polanco *, Hans Urs von Balthasar I...*, op. cit., chapter III.
[905] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 89-90.

906 Cf. Williams , "Balthasar and the Trinity," op. cit., pp. 45-47.
907 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 270.
908 Cf. James Heft , "Marian themes in the writings of Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Communio* 7 (Summer 1980), pp. 127-139.
909 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 272.
910 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 273.
911 Cf. Gardner , "Balthasar and the figure of Mary", op. cit., pp. 67-69.
912 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 276.
913 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 289.
914 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 291.
915 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 277.
916 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 279.
917 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 280.
918 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 284.
919 Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 289-290.
920 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 292.
921 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 293.
922 Cf. Heft , "Marian themes...", op. cit., pp. 129; 136-137.
923 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 295.
924 Cf. Guido Miglietta , "Il volto mariano e femminile della Chiesa secondo Hans Urs von Balthasar", in *Theotokos* V (1997), pp. 265-282.
925 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 295.
926 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 298.
927 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 302.
928 Cf. Heft , "Marian themes...", op. cit., pp. 133-136.
929 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 303.
930 "What is decisive is not the views apparently conditioned by the times, such as the high esteem for virginity and even bodily integrity among all ancient peoples - from now on this argument should no longer be used -, nor the decomposition of the concept of virginity into its constituent elements, where the bodily aspect would be nothing more than a purely accidental aspect; on the contrary, what is decisive, as R. Laurentin rightly sees it, are the theological truths hidden to many. Laurentin rightly sees, are the theological truths hidden to many, of which we have treated, at least briefly" (*Theodramatica,* III, p. 307).
931 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 307.
932 Cf. Gardner , "Balthasar and the figure of Mary", op. cit., pp. 73-75.
933 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 308.
934 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 309.
935 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 311.
936 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 311.
937 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 312.
938 Cf. Gardner , "Balthasar and the figure of Mary", op. cit. p. 76.
939 Cf. Stephan Ackermann , "The Church as Person in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Communio* 29 (Summer 2002), pp. 238-249, here pp. 239-242.
940 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 313.
941 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 314.
942 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 315.
943 Cf. Ackermann , "The Church as Person...", op. cit. pp. 247-248.
944 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 317.
945 *Theodramatica,* III, p. 318.

[946] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 321-322.
[947] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 322.
[948] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 323.
[949] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 324.
[950] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 324.
[951] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 323.
[952] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 325*.
[953] Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Neue Klarstellungen*, JohannesVerlag, Einsiedeln [2]1995, pp. 112-113 (Frauenpriestertum).
[954] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 326.
[955] It is useful to recall here that the focus of Balthasar's concern in these passages of the *Trilogy* is obviously not to inquire into who can or cannot accede to the ordained ministry, but rather to draw consequences for the understanding of the Church, starting from the polar reality of the human being (image of the differences in the Trinity) and the necessary incarnation of redemption.
[956] Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 325-330.
[957] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 325.
[958] Synthesizes here "the many things said on the subject elsewhere" and which "have been summarized in a dense and personal way" in Medard Kehl , *Kirche als Institution,* Knecht, Frankfurt 1976, pp. 239-311 (*Theodramatics,* III, p. 326, note 3).
[959] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 326-327.
[960] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 327.
[961] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 327.
[962] Cf. Saward , "Mary and Peter...", op. cit., pp. 114-133.
[963] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 329.
[964] Cf. supra, chapter VII: The Holy Spirit in the Church and the World.
[965] In all the latter he follows Louis Bouyer, *L'Église de Dieu. Corps du Christ et temple de l'Esprit,* Cerf, Paris 1970, pp. 613-615. Text translated by Balthasar in 1977 (*Die Kirche II: Theologie,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1977).
[966] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 126.
[967] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 127.
[968] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 133.
[969] Cf. Ackermann , "The Church as Person...", op. cit. pp. 242-246.
[970] *Gloria,* I, p. 309.
[971] *Gloria,* I, p. 310. This is related to the "Christological constellation" mentioned above.
[972] *Gloria,* I, pp. 310-312*.
[973] Cf. Saward , "Mary and Peter...", op. cit., pp. 124-129.
[974] *Gloria,* I, p. 312.
[975] *Gloria,* I, p. 313.
[976] *Gloria,* I, pp. 315 and 319.
[977] *Gloria,* I, p. 319.
[978] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 331.
[979] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 331.
[980] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 335-336.
[981] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 336.
[982] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 338-339.
[983] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 343*.
[984] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 344.
[985] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 345.

[986] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 358.
[987] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 358.
[988] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 361.
[989] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 363.
[990] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 363-364.
[991] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 336.
[992] Cf. Lösel , "Unapocalyptic Theology...", op. cit. p. 217.
[993] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 381.
[994] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 385-386.
[995] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 373-374.
[996] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 375.
[997] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 380.
[998] Cf. *Theodramática,* III, p. 380, note 17.
[999] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 381.
[1000] Here he follows Henri de Lubac *, Paradoxe et Mystère de l'Église,* Aubier, Paris 1967, pp. 148-150.
[1001] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 382.
[1002] Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 384-385.
[1003] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 385.
[1004] Cf. *Theodramática,* III, pp. 376-377.
[1005] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 378.
[1006] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 381.
[1007] Cf. Rahner *, Curso Fundamental...*, op. cit., pp. 159-167.
[1008] *Theologica,* III, p. 257.
[1009] *Theologica,* III, p. 259.
[1010] *Theologica,* III, pp. 260-261.
[1011] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, pp. 436-437.
[1012] Cf. *Theodramática,* IV, pp. 437-340.
[1013] *Gloria,* I, p. 496.
[1014] *Gloria,* I, p. 497.
[1015] *Gloria,* I, pp. 497-498.
[1016] *Gloria,* I, p. 498.
[1017] *Gloria,* I, p. 498.
[1018] *Gloria,* I, p. 499.
[1019] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 386.
[1020] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 389.
[1021] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 389-390. Follows Bouyer, *L'Église de Dieu...*, op. cit., pp. 23-27.
[1022] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 391-392.
[1023] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 391.
[1024] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 392.
[1025] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 392.
[1026] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 392-393.
[1027] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 397.
[1028] Cf. *Gloria,* I, pp. 507-536.
[1029] Cf. *Theologica,* III, pp. 317-364.
[1030] *Gloria,* I, p. 524.
[1031] *Gloria,* I, p. 528.
[1032] *Gloria,* I, p. 530.
[1033] Cf. supra, chap. IV: Foundations for a Christological theology of history.

[1034] Cf. Geoffrey Wainwright , "Eschatology", in Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 113-127, here p. 113.

[1035] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 15. Cf. also Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Una primera mirada a Adrienne von Speyr* , Ediciones San Juan, Madrid 2012, pp. 12-14.

[1036] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 15.

[1037] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 16.

[1038] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 25.

[1039] As an example of contemporary thought, he quotes Karl Rahner : "*Christ* himself is the hermeneutical principle of all eschatological statements. What cannot be understood and read as a Christological affirmation is not an authentic eschatological affirmation either" ("Principios teológicos de la hermenéutica de las declaraciones escatológicas", in *Escritos de teología,* IV, Taurus, Madrid 1964, pp. 411-439, here p. 435), quoted in *Teodramática,* V, p. 37.

[1040] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 21.

[1041] Cf. *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 126-127; *Theodramatica,* IV, pp. 209-216.

[1042] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 126.

[1043] *Theodramatica,* III, p. 127.

[1044] *Theodramatica,* III, pp. 128-129.

[1045] Cf. Wainwright , "Eschatology", op. cit., pp. 115-116.

[1046] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 32.

[1047] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 31.

[1048] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 303.

[1049] Cf. *Theodramática,* V, pp. 22-24.

[1050] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 26.

[1051] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 26-27.

[1052] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 26.

[1053] Cf. Karl Hermann Schelkle *, Theologie des Neuen Testament. Vollendung von Schöpfung und Erlösung,* Patmos Verlag, Düsseldorf 1974, pp. 18 and 16.

[1054] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 35.

[1055] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 36*.

[1056] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 37.

[1057] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 40.

[1058] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 40.

[1059] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 44.

[1060] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 46-47.

[1061] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 47.

[1062] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 48.

[1063] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 49.

[1064] Cf. Roberto Carelli , "L'assolutezza dell'amore e la fecondità delle origini. I riflessi protologici dell'eschatologia di Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Path* 8 (2009), pp. 423-447, here pp. 426-433.

[1065] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 56.

[1066] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 56.

[1067] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 57.

[1068] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 187.

[1069] Cf. *Theodramática,* V, p. 189.

[1070] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 189.

[1071] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 190. It refers to a universal reconciliation of all creation at the end of time.

[1072] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 189.
[1073] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 191.
[1074] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 192.
[1075] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 192.
[1076] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 193.
[1077] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 194.
[1078] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 195.
[1079] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 196*.
[1080] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 197.
[1081] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 197.
[1082] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 198.
[1083] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 200.
[1084] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 205.
[1085] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 201.
[1086] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 206. In *Theodramatics,* V, pp. 202-205, he refers to the understanding of the diabolical as "the null" (*das Nichtige*), affirmed by Karl Barth in *Kirchliche Dogmatik,* III/3, Theologischer Verlag, Zürich 1950, § 50 and 51. Balthasar's opinion is that for no ontology is the existence of this (third) form of being possible (*Theodramatics,* V, p. 205).
[1087] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 207.
[1088] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 208.
[1089] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 209.
[1090] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 210.
[1091] Cf. Gustave Martelet *, L'Au-delà retrouvé. Christologie des fins dernieres,* Desclée, Paris 1974, pp. 181; 188-189, quoted in *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 210-211.
[1092] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 211.
[1093] Cf. Peter Kuhn , "Gottes Selbsterniedrigung in der Theologie der Rabbinen", in V. Kamp - J. Schmid - P. Neuenzeit (eds.), *Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament,* vol. XVII, Kosel Verlag, München 1908; and, above all, Id, *Gottes Trauer und Klage in der rabbinischen Überlieferung (Talmud und Midrasch),* Brill, Leiden 1978.
[1094] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 212.
[1095] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 214.
[1096] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 215.
[1097] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 216.
[1098] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 218, citing *In Ez hom* 6, 6 (Baehrens VIII, 384 f.).
[1099] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 219.
[1100] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 223.
[1101] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 221.
[1102] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 225.
[1103] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 234.
[1104] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 236.
[1105] *Dieu souffre-t-il?,* Lethielleux, Paris 1976.
[1106] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 237.
[1107] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 238.
[1108] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 239.
[1109] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 242.
[1110] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 57.
[1111] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 245.
[1112] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 245.

[1113] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 248.

[1114] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 249, quoting Adrienne von Speyr *, Johannes I. Das Wort wird Fleisch. Betrachtungen über das Johannesevangelium Kapitel 1-5*, Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1949, p. 48.

[1115] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 250.

[1116] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 254-255.

[1117] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 255.

[1118] Cf. *Theology,* II, pp. 135-136. Cf. supra, chap. II: Trinity and the existence of the "other" in God.

[1119] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 257*.

[1120] Adrienne von Speyr *, Johannes III. Die Abschiedsreden. Betrachtungen über das Johannesevangelium Kapitel 13-17,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1948, p. 380.

[1121] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 257. He refers to Adrienne von Speyr *, Johannes III...*, op. cit., pp. 378-380; Id. *Das Angesicht des Vaters,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1955, p. 66; Id. *Die Streitreden. Betrachtungen über das Johannesevangelium Kapitel 6-12,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1949, pp. 474-475; 334; 338; 339.

[1122] Cf. Adrienne von Speyr *, Johannes IV. Geburt der Kirche. Betrachtungen über das Johannesevangelium Kapitel 18-21,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1949, pp. 186-187; 191.

[1123] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 265.

[1124] DH 411.

[1125] Cf. Wainwright , "Eschatology", op. cit., pp. 121-125.

[1126] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 266-267.

[1127] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 267.

[1128] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 268.

[1129] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 269.

[1130] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 270.

[1131] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 272*.

[1132] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 273.

[1133] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 274.

[1134] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 279, citing Speyr *, Johannes II...*, op. cit., pp. 356-357.

[1135] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 280. Cf. note 26 and Wainwright , "Eschatology", op. cit., p. 123.

[1136] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 281.

[1137] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 284, citing Adrienne von Speyr *, Johannes IV...*, op. cit., p. 15; and Id., *Die Katholischen Briefe, II. Die Johannesbriefe,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1961, p. 100, respectively.

[1138] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 286, citing Adrienne von Speyr *, Apokalypse. Betrachtungen über die geheime Offenbarung,* 2 vol., Herold, Wien 1950, p. 476.

[1139] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 283. Cf. Adrienne von Speyr *, Passion von innen,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1981, p. 71.

[1140] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 286.

[1141] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 286-287.

[1142] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 287.

[1143] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 287.

[1144] Karl Lehmann - Leo Scheffczyk - Rudolf Schnackenburg - Hermann Volk *, Vollendung des Lebens. Hoffnung auf Herrlichkeit,* Grünewald, Mainz 1978, pp. 88-89, quoted in *Theodramatica,* V, p. 287.

[1145] Johann Heinrich Oswald *, Eschatologie, das ist, die letzten Dinge dargestellt nach der Lehre der katholischen Kirche,* Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn [3]1893, p. 25, quoted in *Theodramatica,* V, p. 288.

[1146] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 288.
[1147] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 290-291.
[1148] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 291.
[1149] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 294.
[1150] Walter Kreck, *Die Zukunft des Gekommenen,* Kaiser, München 1966, p. 147, quoted in *Theodramatica*, V, p. 295.
[1151] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 295-296.
[1152] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 296.
[1153] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 296*.
[1154] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 296.
[1155] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 296-297.
[1156] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 297*.
[1157] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 297.
[1158] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 297*.
[1159] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 297.
[1160] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 298.
[1161] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 299. Cf. Speyr *, Die Katholischen Briefe,* II, op. cit., pp. 184 and 237.
[1162] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 299.
[1163] Speyr *, Die Katholischen Briefe,* I, op. cit., p. 83, quoted in *Theodramatica,* V, p. 299.
[1164] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 300.
[1165] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 300.
[1166] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 301.
[1167] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 302.
[1168] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 303.
[1169] *Noche Oscura* II, 8, in San Juan de la Cruz *, Obras completas,* BAC, Madrid [14]1994, quoted in *Teodramática,* V, p. 304.
[1170] Speyr *, Passion von innen,* op. cit., p. 132, quoted in *Theodramatica,* V, p. 305.
[1171] Speyr *, Johannes II...*, op. cit., p. 386, quoted in *Theodramatica,* V, p. 305.
[1172] Speyr *, Die Katholischen Briefe,* I, op. cit., p. 327, quoted in *Theodramatica,* V, p. 306.
[1173] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 306, quoting in the last two texts Speyr *, Johannes III...*, op. cit., p. 165.
[1174] Speyr *, Die Katholischen Briefe,* II, op. cit., pp. 226-227, quoted in *Theodramatica*, V, p. 306.
[1175] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 307.
[1176] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 307.
[1177] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 307*. The text quotes Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Ideas sobre la eschatología", in *Pneuma e institución. Ensayos teológicos,* IV, Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 2008, pp. 338-374, here p. 365. We quote according to the latter text, since the translation of *Teodramática* omits a phrase.
[1178] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 307, citing Balthasar, "Ideas on Eschatology," op. cit. p. 365.
[1179] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 309*.
[1180] Adrienne von Speyr *, Korinther I,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1956, p. 496.
[1181] Speyr *, Johannes IV...*, op. cit., p. 173.
[1182] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 309.
[1183] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 309-310*, quoting in the final part Speyr *, Der Epheserbrief,* op. cit., pp. 30-31.
[1184] Louis Lochet, *Jésus descendu aux enfers,* Cerf, Paris 1979, p. 31.
[1185] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 310.

[1186] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 311.
[1187] Speyr , *Der Epheserbrief,* op. cit., pp. 30-31.
[1188] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 310, quoting respectively two texts from Speyr , *Die Katholischen Briefe,* II, op. cit., p. 37 and two others from Speyr , *Johannes IV...*, op. cit., p. 174.
[1189] Balthasar will repeat some of these ideas in *Theology,* II, pp. 332-348, where he speaks of *Hell and Trinity,* referring to the incarnation in its aspect of assuming the *caro peccati.* Cf. supra, chap. V: Human life of the Word made flesh.
[1190] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 311.
[1191] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 311.
[1192] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 311.
[1193] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 312.
[1194] Cf. *Theodramática,* V, p. 189.
[1195] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 315.
[1196] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 316.
[1197] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 315. The texts of Mechthild and Therese are quoted from Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Schwestern im Geist,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1970, p. 319. *Historia de una misión,* Herder, Barcelona 1957.
[1198] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 319.
[1199] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 320*.
[1200] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 320.
[1201] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 321*.
[1202] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 322.
[1203] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 327.
[1204] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 328.
[1205] Adrienne von Speyr , *Das Geheimnis des Todes,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1953, p. 41, quoted in *Theodramatics,* V, p. 334.
[1206] Adrienne von Speyr , *Korinther I,* op. cit., p. 181, quoted in *Theodramatics,* V, p. 334.
[1207] *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 334-335*.
[1208] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 339.
[1209] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 341*.
[1210] Buckhard Neunheuser , "Letztes Gericht," in Theodor Bogler (ed.), *Tod und Leben. Von den Letzten Dingen,* Ars liturgica, Maria Laach 1950, p. 83, quoted in *Theodramatica,* V, p. 342.
[1211] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 342.
[1212] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 343.
[1213] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 344.
[1214] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 345.
[1215] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 346.
[1216] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 347.
[1217] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 348.
[1218] Joseph Ratzinger , *Eschatology. La muerte y la vida eterna,* Herder, Barcelona ^{2}2007, p. 137, quoted in *Teodramática,* V, pp. 348-349, note 23*.
[1219] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 349.
[1220] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 349.
[1221] Karl Rahner , "Über den 'Zwischenzustand'" ["On the 'intermediate state'"], in *Schriften zur Theologie,* XII, Benziger, Köln 1975, pp. 455-466, here p. 456.
[1222] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 350.
[1223] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 352.
[1224] Ratzinger , *Eschatology,* op. cit., p. 246*.
[1225] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 353.

[1226] Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Eschatology", in *Verbum caro. Ensayos teológicos,* I, Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid [2]2001, pp. 273-297, here p. 284*, quoted in *Teodramática*, V, p. 353, note 1.

[1227] *Theodramatica,* V, p. 355.

[1228] *Geschichte des eschatologischen Problems in der modernen deutschen Literatur.* Abhandlung zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der philosophischen Fakultät I der Universität Zürich. Selbstverlag des Verfassers, Zürich, 219 pp.

[1229] Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Escatología en nuestro tiempo,* Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid 2008, pp. 159-163, where all of them are cited in order of appearance.

[1230] Cf. Elio Guerriero *, Hans Urs von Balthasar. Eine Monographie,* Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, Freiburg 1993, pp. 382-383 (German translation of the original Italian monograph *Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Edizioni Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo 1991).

[1231] *Das Herz der Welt,* Arche, Zürich 1944.

[1232] Published posthumously together with another text entitled "The Ultimate Things of Man and the Christian," in Balthasar, *Eschatology in Our Time*, op. cit. pp. 11-85.

[1233] This is Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Eschatologie", in Johannes Feiner - Josef Trütsch - Franz Böckle (eds.), *Fragen der Theologie heute,* Benziger, Einsiedeln 1957, pp. 403-421, published in Spanish as "Escatología", in *Panorama de teología actual,* Guadarrama, Madrid 1961, republished in Id, "Eschatology," in *Verbum caro...*, op. cit.

[1234] *Theology of the Three Days. El Misterio Pascual,* Madrid, Ediciones Encuentro 2000, originally written for Johannes Feiner - Magnus Löhrer (dirs.), *Mysterium salutis. Manual de teología como historia de la salvación,* III/2, Cristiandad, Madrid 1971, pp. 143-335.

[1235] Manfred Hauke , "I Santi e l'inferno vuoto. Note critiche sull'ultima grande controversia di Hans Urs von Balthasar", in *Fides Catholica - Firenze* IV/1 (2000), pp. 229-260, here pp. 231-232.

[1236] Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Un pequeño discurso sobre el infierno", in Id., *Tratado sobre el infierno,* Edicep, Valencia 1999, pp. 129-175, here p. 131.

[1237] Hans Urs von Balthasar, "What Can We Expect?", in Id., *A Treatise on Hell,* op. cit. pp. 7-128, here pp. 56 and 51, respectively.

[1238] "Zur Frage: 'Hoffnung für alle'. Eine Antwort auf den Artikel von Pfarrer Karl Besler", in *Theologisches* 199 (1986), pp. 7363-7366.

[1239] Op. cit.

[1240] Op. cit.

[1241] Which was a lecture at the Faculty of Theology in Trier, also published in *A Treatise on Hell,* op. cit. pp. 177-199.

[1242] Especially - but not only - in the German journals *Der Fels* and *Theologisches* (cf. Hauke , "I Santi e l'inferno vuoto...", op. cit., pp. 230-240; Balthasar, "A Little Discourse on Hell", op. cit., p. 131).

[1243] Balthasar, "A Little Discourse on Hell," op. cit. p. 131.

[1244] Ib., pp. 133-134.

[1245] Cf. ibid., p. 167.

[1246] Ib., p. 132.

[1247] Cf. ibid., p. 134.

[1248] Cf. Balthasar, "What Can We Expect?" op. cit. pp. 77-89.

[1249] Cf. Balthasar, "A Little Discourse on Hell," op. cit. pp. 135-136.

[1250] Ibid., p. 134.

[1251] Ib., p. 141.

[1252] Balthasar, "What Can We Expect?", op. cit., p. 121.

[1253] Cf. Jacques Servais , "Communion, universality and apocatastasis: hope for all?", in

Communio 18 (1996), pp. 445-458.

1254 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 365.

1255 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 365.

1256 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 366*.

1257 *Theodramatica,* II, p. 163, citing Karl Barth , *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik,* III/3, Evangelischer Verlag, Zürich 1950, p. 503.

1258 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 367*.

1259 *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 367-368. He cites Speyr , *Die Katholischen Briefe,* II, op. cit., p. 213; Id., *Das Angesicht des Vaters*, op. cit., p. 103; Id., *Isaias. Erklärung ausgewählter Texte. Mit einem Anhang zu den Visionen Daniels,* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln 1958, p. 30; among other texts by her.

1260 Herbert Vorgrimler , *Hoffnung auf Vollendung. Aufriss der Eschatologie* (QD 90), Herder, Freiburg 1980, pp. 166-167, quoted in *Theodramatica,* V, p. 368*.

1261 Albertus Magnus , *De Resurrectione,* tr 2 q 9 a 3 (vol. XXVI, 1958, p. 286), quoted in *Theodramatica,* V, p. 369.

1262 *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 379-380.

1263 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 380.

1264 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 382.

1265 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 383.

1266 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 383.

1267 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 384.

1268 Speyr , *Johannes IV...*, op. cit., pp. 262 and 482, quoted in *Theodramatics,* V, p. 383* (in brackets, Balthasar's words).

1269 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 385*.

1270 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 386.

1271 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 413.

1272 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 414.

1273 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 416.

1274 *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 418-419.

1275 *Llama de amor,* II, 34, in San Juan de la Cruz , *Obras completas,* op. cit., quoted in *Teodramática,* V, p. 419.

1276 Cf. *Canticle,* Stanza 39, 3-6, in St. John of the Cross , *Collected Works,* op. cit., quoted in *Theodramatica,* V, p. 420.

1277 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 421.

1278 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 421.

1279 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 422.

1280 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 424.

1281 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 426*.

1282 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 427.

1283 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 429*.

1284 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 438.

1285 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 445.

1286 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 446.

1287 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 447.

1288 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 456.

1289 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 450.

1290 *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 451-452.

1291 Hippolytus , *The Antichrist,* 61, quoted in *Theodramatics,* V, p. 452.

1292 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 454.

1293 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 453.

1294 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 457.

1295 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 464.

1296 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 467*.

1297 *Theodramatica,* V, pp. 476-477.

1298 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 479.

1299 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 480.

1300 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 489.

1301 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 490*.

1302 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 490.

1303 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 491.

1304 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 491.

1305 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 492.

1306 Cf. *Theodramática,* V, p. 496.

1307 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 502.

1308 *Theodramatica,* V, p. 502.

1309 Balthasar, "An Attempt to Summarize...," op. cit. p. 284.

1310 *Epilogue,* p. 9.

1311 Cf. P. Probst , "Polarität", in Joachim Ritter (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 7, Schwabe, Basel 1989, col. 1026-1029, here col. 1026-1027 (echoing Goethe).

1312 Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Teología y santidad", in *Verbum caro. Ensayos teológicos*, I, Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid [2]2001, pp. 195-223, here p. 222.

1313 Cf. Edward T. Oakes , "Envoi: the future of Balthasarian theology", in Edward T. Oakes - David Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 269-274, here p. 269.